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The Vedanta Kesari

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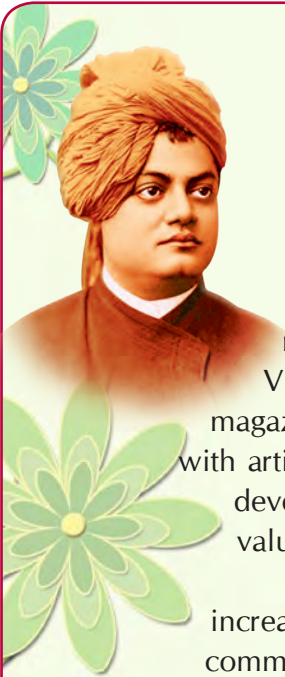
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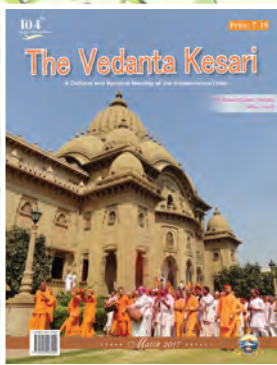
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COVER STORY



An eastern-side view of Sri Ramakrishna Temple, Belur Math.

Dol Purnima celebration in Belur Math. On this day a picture of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is kept in the Main Temple and sannyasis, brahmacharis, and devotees sing devotional songs on Sri Krishna and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Later they go around the Math campus dancing and singing. After the evening arati of Sri Ramakrishna in the Main Temple, a simple worship of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is performed. Then a senior sannyasi delivers a talk on the life and teachings of the Mahaprabhu.

Photo credit: Sri Debraj Mitra

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Hastamalakiyam

Question: Why should there be a presiding controller for the functioning of the mind and other sense organs? Can't they function by themselves? And why should that presiding controller be of the nature of Eternal Knowledge? Knowledge is produced from the contact of the senses with the sense objects. But this knowledge is destroyed with the rising of a new knowledge either from other sense objects or from inner tendencies. Therefore knowledge is non-eternal. How then can this non-eternal knowledge be the nature of Atman, which Vedanta considers as eternal?

These questions are answered in the second sloka.

यमग्न्युष्णवन्नित्यबोधस्वरूपं मनश्चक्षुरादीन्यबोधात्मकानि ।
प्रवर्तन्त आश्रित्य निष्कम्पमेकं स नित्योपलब्धिस्वरूपोऽहमात्मा ॥ 2

*yam agnyuṣṇavan nitya-bodha-svarūpaṃ manaś-cakṣurādīnyabodhātmakāni |
pravartanta āśritya niṣkampamekaṃ sa nityopalabdhi-svarūpo'hamātmā ||*

'I am that Atman, of the nature of Eternal Knowledge, the Unmoving and the One; Material things like mind, eyes etc are acting with the support of the Eternal Knowledge, which is inseparable from me, like heat from fire.'

Here, the word Eternal Knowledge refers not to the knowledge produced from the contact of the senses with the objects, but to Consciousness Itself. Being perceivable, sense knowledge is different from Consciousness which is the Perceiver. Hence, knowledge of the objects or produced knowledge is only non-eternal and insentient.

What is the proof that the Atman is Consciousness Itself?

The answer is that the world is perceived. Matter cannot perceive matter. It can be perceived only by a Conscious Principle which is the Atman. Atman is self-effulgent like the sun. The sun is self-effulgent and also brightens the world. Similarly, the Atman is of the nature of Eternal Knowledge and self-effulgent, and it also reveals all the objects.

Sri Ramakrishna says:

" God alone does everything, He is the Operator and man the machine. 'Thou workest Thine own work; men only call it theirs.' Do you know what it is like? Vedanta philosophy gives an illustration. Suppose you are cooking rice in a pot, with potato, eggplant, and other vegetables. After a while they begin to jump about in the pot. They seem to say with pride: 'We are moving! We are jumping!' The children see it and think the potatoes, eggplant, and rice are alive and so they jump that way. But the elders, who know, explain to the children that the vegetables and the rice are not alive; they jump not of themselves, but because of the fire under the pot; if you remove the burning wood from the hearth, then they will move no more. Likewise the pride of man, that he is the doer, springs from ignorance. Men are powerful because of the power of God. The puppets dance well on the stage when pulled by a wire, but they cannot move when the wire snaps. (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, 893)

☪ Translated and explained by Swami Suprajananda

Spot the Anchor

One moonlit night, a drunken man decided to cross a river. At the river bank he stepped into an empty boat, sat down at the oars and started rowing. He rowed and rowed all through the night. At dawn a great surprise awaited him. Despite rowing with all his might, the boat had not moved an inch!

He had forgotten to raise the anchor!!

Many of us similarly seek to sail across the ocean of samsara unaware of the anchors weighing us down and hindering our progress.

Going forward is most important in life. Every moment we either evolve or degenerate. Every day, we either go forward or go backward. There is no station of rest.

The Upanishadic rishis therefore call out—‘charaiveti, charaiveti’, keep moving, keep moving. Sri Ramakrishna often urged his listeners to go forward and told them the story of the woodcutter: ‘A wood cutter once entered a forest to gather wood. A brahmachari said to him, ‘Go forward.’ He obeyed the injunction and discovered some sandal-wood trees. After a few days he reflected, “The holy man asked me to go forward. He didn’t tell me to stop here.” So he went forward and found a silver-mine. After a few days he went still farther and discovered a gold-mine, and next, mines of diamonds and precious stones. With these he became immensely rich.’

This attempt to move forward, involves a gradual process of evolution, an expansion of our consciousness. It is a journey towards fulfilment—journey both in the internal and external world. At first it is a process of

sublimating our base instincts through psycho-social evolution by performing our duties towards our family, friends, and society. Then we embark on the greater inward journey in order to realise and manifest our inner divinity.

As we begin our inward journey, we are like a child who gives up the toys of its childhood in order to step into youth and adulthood. For this transition into the bigger world, the child has to give up its childhood attractions, fears and limitations. Only then can it explore, expand and grow. Similarly, a person who stagnates at the level of a child will not be able to unfold his latent higher possibilities. Life is a journey from the physical manifestation of our possibilities to the unfolding of our higher possibilities at the moral, aesthetic and spiritual levels.

Swami Vivekananda entreats us, ‘I only ask you to go forward and to complete the practical realisation of the scheme of human progress that has been laid out in the most perfect order by our ancestors. I only ask you to work to realise more and more the Vedantic ideal of the solidarity of man and his inborn divine nature.’

Yet, we find ourselves in the condition of the drunkard rowing the anchored boat. We are anchored in so many ways. A septuagenarian in an old age home seethes with pain and anger against his son and daughter-in-law. And he wonders why he has no peace in spite of leading a prayerful life. A noble lady, with wide scholarship, cannot forget how she was victimised by her colleagues in the office. Her spiritual

practices seem to yield no results. Aren't these two anchored by ill will? Hatred is as strong a bondage as infatuation and so the Bible advises, 'If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there at the altar and go. First make peace with your brother, and then come and present your offering.' A sadhaka who has renounced the world still strongly relishes food, unmindful of Swami Vivekananda's warning, 'Give the organ of taste a free rein, and the other organs will also run on unbridled.' Isn't he anchored by his tongue?

Even a sincere sadhaka can become anchored unwittingly. King Bharata, after whom our land came to be called Bharatavarsha, discharged his duties as a king and father and then retired into the forests as a wandering ascetic. Abandoning all desires, alone, peaceful and blissful at heart he was immersed in worshipping Sri Hari. One day, overcome with pity, he saved a motherless fawn from being drowned in the river and then brought it to his ashrama. He fed it, fondled it, protected it and tried to please it in every way. Obsessed with the deer and distressed by vague and baseless fears about its safety, he neglected his devotional practices. The deer became his anchor. Even at the moment of death his mind was firmly fixed on the deer and in the next life he was born as a deer.

How can we recognise our anchors?

A sincere and pure mind can identify any anchor. Once in Dakshineswar Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi was unwell and could not get up at three o'clock. She felt lethargic. The next day she got up even later. This happened on several successive days and gradually she had no inclination to get up early. Then one day it flashed upon her that she was anchored by

laziness. She soon returned to her old routine. But later in life, she deliberately anchored herself to her niece Radhu in order to keep her mind in this world.

Satsanga is one sure way to recognise our anchors. Once the potter-saint Gora Kumbhar tapped the heads of his guests with his potter's stick. They were no ordinary guests. Sitting with a peaceful smile and submitting to the gentle tapping on their heads were Nivritti, Jnanadev, Sopan, Namdev, Muktabai and others. They were great devotees of the Lord and revered as saints even in their own lifetime. On Jnanadev's request Gora was testing them to see which of them had sound or perfect knowledge. But Namdev was strongly offended that his spiritual attainment should be put to test. Gora then humbly declared Namdev as half-baked and not established in the final truth. Namdev was the dearest devotee of Lord Vitthala of Pandharpur. He would speak with the Lord whenever he wished. His world began and ended with Vithoba. He did not recognise any other form of God. But this fanatical devotion was hindering his progress into the higher and deeper experience of God. Greatly humiliated, Namdev rushed to the Lord Vithoba, who pointed out his mistake and sent him to a guru for further realisation.

Truly, the greatest barriers to our progress lie not in the world outside but in our own minds. The scriptures speak of eight such bondages or anchors that bear us down. They are hatred, fear, shame, aversion, egoism, vanity, pride of noble descent, and obsession with formal good conduct. Any one of them can hinder our progress.

Let us reflect deeply on our goals, assess our progress, spot our anchors and break free to move towards the goal supreme. *



Reminiscences of Sargachhi

SWAMI SUHITANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue. . .)

Swami Premeshananda (1884–1967) was a disciple of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi. For over two decades, he lived at Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Sargachhi, first as its monastic-in-charge and later as a retired sannyasi. He inspired countless people to lead a life of spirituality and service. Influenced by him many young men and women entered into monastic life. His conversations and teachings were noted by his attendant novice who is now Swami Suhitananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. These spiritual dialogues were serialized in Udbodhan (the Bengali monthly of the Ramakrishna Order) and later published as a book titled Sargachchir Smriti. Sri Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee has translated these reminiscences into English. English words and expressions which appear in the original have been retained and shown within single inverted commas.

|| 14 ||

12.01.60

Maharaj: Everywhere there is dearth of leaders. There is no leader in the whole of India. In our country leaders see others as their servants. It seems as if it is not in their stars to take everyone into consideration and work after consulting with everyone; they only speak ill of others in their absence. Swamiji has time and again emphasized on 'practical wisdom.' This 'wisdom' doesn't come unless one gains experience by working. My eyes have opened after coming to Murshidabad. All are of the type –'move not, change not, stay put at home.' As a result most of them are like a diseased fruit that won't ripen. Is it for nothing that Holy Mother said, 'My boy, work is the means to prosperity.' Work makes a man efficient and reduces his eccentricities. Big landlords idle away their time and become good-for-nothing with no experience in the affairs of the world. In the house of a distinguished gentleman, servants used to do the marketing; they would bring useless

things from the market and everyone had to eat that. After being in my company, he now brings the shopping bag carrying it on his own shoulders. He used to send his son to school with a servant carrying the books. The boy was fed so much that he fell ill and had to live on only barley water for six months. They would feed him food items made with Dalda [hydrogenated vegetable oil] not knowing that Dalda is bad for health.

Look here, I will tell you an important thing. If you want to be a sannyasi in the Ramakrishna Mission then form the habit of waking up at 3 or 3.30 a.m. Our 'I' does not go away so easily. Thoughts like, 'I have such a qualification', 'I belong to such a family' come back to us in some form or other. To forget all these, one has to develop oneself. If one becomes merely 'academic' one simply studies and studies; but will that help to progress?

Attendant: Maharaj, should we practise *dhyana-yoga* (the yoga of meditation)?

Maharaj: By only practicing Raja-yoga one gains tremendous control over the vital force.

As a result one can simultaneously assume five different bodies. Its purpose is not to go beyond the body, but to enjoy remaining within the body. One who seeks liberation goes beyond the body. He has to discard all the four sheaths. We should not do too much 'austerity'. So we follow the middle path. At the place where I started an ashrama, we used to wear at one time dhotis seven cubits long. Later, as boys from well-to-do families came, cots were procured and a house made of wood replaced one made of bamboo. Women were not allowed in the ashram. But if outside people came, I used to converse with them sitting in a particular room. Brahmacharins could not mix with them. This free access in our Mission has one benefit. The kind of unethical things that were done in old monasteries – if you hear about them, you will run away with fingers in your ears. Here one lives and moves around in front of others; so everyone has to maintain restraint.

Swami Vivekananda had a conversation with Lokamanya Tilak. Tilak also said that if one does not work in the initial stage, then nothing can be done properly. Now sannyasis of other monastic organisations also have acknowledged the necessity of work.

Nothing much is accomplished by inspiring those with poor intellect. Also I do not inspire everybody. I discourage some persons from becoming sannyasis when I see that they don't have even an iota of a sannyasi's mentality.

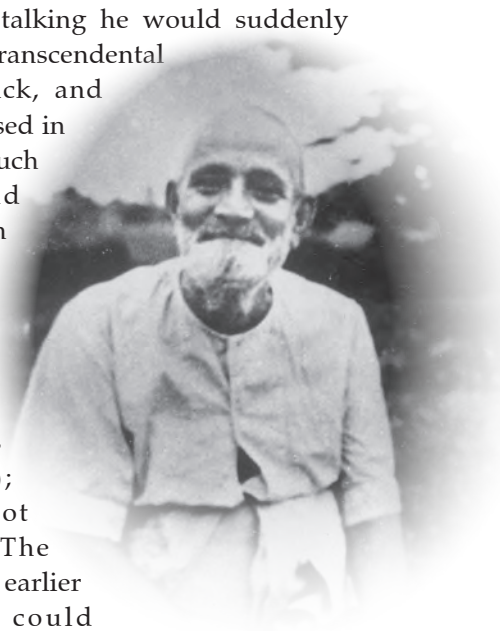
Attendant: Compared to other incarnations, what is the speciality of Sri Ramakrishna?

Maharaj: What was seen in Sri Ramakrishna has never been seen earlier. Swami Brahmananda used to go up to Saguna Brahman, Swamiji used to go up to Nirguna Brahman. Sri Ramakrishna was himself Nirguna Brahman. He charmed whomever

he met. While talking he would suddenly go into some transcendental state, come back, and again be immersed in that state. So much revelation had not been seen in any other incarnation. There is also mention in one or two places of Sri Krishna's *yoga* (union); but it was not so manifest. The companions of earlier incarnations could not understand this. *Swami Premeshananda* Perhaps this level of manifestation was not necessary.

Each of the earlier incarnations manifested mainly either devotion, or work, or compassion, or knowledge. All these were dominant in Sri Ramakrishna. In Sri Krishna it was work, in Buddha it was compassion, in Chaitanya it was devotion, and in Sankara it was knowledge. But in Sri Ramakrishna it was everything. How energetic he was in work! He went from home to home; he called out – 'come ye, wherever you are.' Besides, in olden times there was no printing press to help them in maintaining records. It is because of Vyasa that we know about Krishna; other accounts were written much later. We have no pictures of the other incarnations as we have of Sri Ramakrishna. This time the incarnation had to reveal himself so much because of the needs of the society. That is why he is *Avataravarishtha* (the greatest among incarnations).

Attendant: Where is work in Sri Chaitanya and Sri Ramakrishna?



Maharaj: Sri Chaitanya travelled across the entire south India. Apart from that, the whole of India still remains soaked in the flood of devotion that flowed in his life. After his passing away so many great men appeared. Along with the advent of Sri Ramakrishna, there is a revival of brahminhood: so many schools and universities are coming up and everybody has an opportunity for self-improvement.

17.1.60

Kathamrita (The Bengali original of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*) is being read. Sri Ramakrishna, in the spirit of Kali, had assumed the posture *varabhaya* – granting boon and assurance.

Maharaj: This is not seen in any earlier incarnations. In every picture showing Sri Ramakrishna in samadhi, he has the posture of *varabhaya*. You will come to know later. At first I used to worship Govindaji. Then I read *Charitamrita* (Life of Sri Chaitanya) and became excited. Finally, after reading *Kathamrita*, I realized it to be the best of all.

18.1.60

The discussion on grace in *Talks with Swami Vivekananda* was being read. Listening to it Maharaj said: This is the last and the most beautiful word on grace. Those who cry ‘grace, grace’ without doing any spiritual practice, are escapists. If a person really depends on grace, then he will remain engrossed in the thought of his Chosen Deity. But unless one has a strong urge to realize Him the question of grace does not even arise. Those who wish to become sannyasis should feel a strong attraction for Him and have a strong desire to realize Him. Without these, it is better to remain as a *Naisthika Brahmachari* (life-long Brahmacharin).

20.01.60

Revered Vice-President Maharaj is coming to Sargachhi to give initiation. The doctor treating Maharaj will also receive initiation. But he has already received a mantra in a dream.

Maharaj: Whatever you got in a dream, you have that. Now what you will listen from the lips of an awakened, realised guru will be the right thing. Things perceived in dreams are sometimes very good, and again many a time they are also wrong.

I saw a young man who remained excited with *prasada*, *charanamrita* etc. That is one type! Actually the mind is not turned towards God. I do not say that such things are bad – I respect it very much. But to remain excited only with such things – how is that! Moreover, such things are just a show-off; the desire to ostentatiously display oneself lies hidden in the mind.

16.02.60

Attendant: Maharaj, didn’t Swamiji have more compassion than Sri Ramakrishna? For instance, we see that Sri Ramakrishna was very choosy in accepting disciples – all his disciples were diamond pieces.

Maharaj: You see, Sri Ramakrishna remained just one step below the state of *Nirguna Brahman* – he remained as fully manifested God. All other avatars had assumed the human form and behaved like human beings. But Sri Ramakrishna was God-like right from his childhood; human disposition was less. It was as if a cover was placed over God – *Vidya Maya*. He always remained in *bhava-samadhi*. If someone took the name of God while yawning, it was enough to send him into samadhi. Hence, it was impossible for him to interact with ordinary people. Saradananda Maharaj has

written – ‘At Panihati, it as if his body was one of ecstasy (*bhava-tanu*).’ It was therefore very difficult for him to live and move around in this world.

01.03.60

Attendant: There are two statements in the Rules and Regulations of the Ramakrishna Mission which seem to be apparently contradictory. Swamiji says that whoever endeavours to realise God by taking up one, or two, or more of – knowledge, work, devotion and yoga, would be eligible for becoming a member of this Order. A little later, however, it is stated that without harmonizing knowledge, work, devotion and yoga, one is not ground in the mortar of Ramakrishna.

Maharaj: This apparent contradiction can be resolved. We had to think over this for many days. The first question is of eligibility. If he has this, then he is fit for the Order; later when he is able to harmonize the four yogas, he really becomes a part of the Order.

Studying to sit for an examination and studying spiritual scriptures are heaven and hell apart. Here unless one deeply contemplates on an idea and brings it into practice, nothing is accomplished. The Bhagavad Gita speaks of stabilizing the mind – ‘it is restrained by practice and renunciation.’ (6/35)

Attendant: What kind of knowledge did Gopal’s Mother have?

Maharaj: Do you know what kind of knowledge she had? There was a precious thing lying in the room, but one isn’t conscious of that. The Gopis also had this kind of pure devotion. Sri Ramakrishna used to pray:

‘Mother, don’t give me the knowledge of Brahman, don’t make me unconscious’; this is called pure devotion.

06.03.60

Maharaj: *Karma-phala* is deadly – simply entering into it is dangerous for it is difficult to come out. There is a saying in Sylhet – ‘You are preparing a sweet pie, it must be eaten to finish it off.’ Why are you making a cake? Unless you eat it, how would it be finished? It has to be eaten. Why did you enter into this? Everyone has to reap the *Karma-phala* (fruits of one’s actions). *Karma-phala* is of three types – *sanchita*, *prarabdha*, *kriyamana*. That which is accumulated from my earlier births is *sanchita karma-phala* – like my stock of impressions. Taking some part of it my present life has started rolling – that part with which I have started my life, is called *prarabdha*. And *kriyamana* is what I am creating in this life.

You have a lot of money saved in the bank. Out of that you have taken ten thousand rupees to build a house. This is *prarabdha*. This life is constituted by *prarabdha* – the whole of *prarabdha* has to be spent. Whatever remains unspent and whatever accrues as *kriyamana* will cause your next birth.

Attendant: Okay. But is there no liberation from this *karma-phala*?

Maharaj: There is liberation only if you attain knowledge. Only with illumination one gets relief from *sanchita karma-phala* – there is no way other than that. *Prarabdha* will have to be experienced. But how does a jnani see this experiencing of *prarabdha*? *Naiva kincit karomiti* (I am not doing anything — Bhagavad Gita 5/8).
(*To be continued. . .*)

If one keeps three-quarters of his mind fixed within, he can shake the world with the remaining quarter. —Swami Premeshananda

The Prophet of Divine Name—Sri Chaitanya

SWAMI SWAHANANDA

Religious life in Bengal has followed two main channels, viz. Vaishnavism and Saktism. Both have some common characteristics peculiar to the soil. Bengal is blessed with many rivers including the Mother Ganga. In fact, the land is called Nadimatrika, 'mothered by the rivers'. In olden days the poetic atmosphere, the easy-going life of the society based on agriculture which gave ample time to think, and the continuous advent of the teachers of emotional cults made the mind of the people peculiarly soft, devotional and imaginative. This emotional temperament found its expression in poetry, drama, art and in devotional songs and mystic realisation. In fact, love which stirs the emotions of all people was chastened and found expression in their religious life. The cult of Sakti worship was already familiar. The Siva-Sakti conception contributed a good deal in giving the peculiar doctrine of Radha-Krishna in Bengal of which Sri Chaitanya is the best exponent. Radha is accepted by two other Vaishnava teachers, viz. Vallabha and Nimbarka, but She is not mentioned by name in the *Harivamsa*, *Vishnupurana* and *Bhagavata*. According to scholars, no woman conception was connected at first with the Krishna worship, as we see in the pure Pancharatra or Bhagavata system. Then came Radha to be associated with Him in the systems of these three saints, while Rukmini, the lawful wife, was united with Him in the Maratha area. Among the predecessors of Sri Chaitanya there were three famous Vaishnava mystics who have immortalised

themselves by writing on the divine Sport of Radha-Krishna. They are Jayadeva, Vidyapati and Chandidas.

There are differing versions regarding the place and time of these holy men. Jayadeva was an Oriya poet of the 12th century domiciled in Birbhum, a district in Bengal. His *Gitagovinda* in Sanskrit verse has become a classic and is the property of the whole country. It is said that before marriage Jayadeva was practising severe austerity but on receiving an order from God in his inmost heart he married Padmavati who was to be given in marriage to the Lord Himself because of a vow made by her parents. The union proved to be very beneficial. Jayadeva's songs about the Sport of Sri Krishna are masterpieces of poetry in subject matter, imagination and diction and they show clearly that the poet wrote them in a mood of higher mystic inspiration. His famous hymn on the ten Incarnations of God is chanted everywhere in India.

Vidyapati belonged to the 14th century. He was also an old devotional composer and dealt with the cult of love and devotion in his superb poems. In a famous line he says:

Vidyapati takes shelter at the feet of the Lord and prays imploringly for a little grace to cross this ocean of transmigration.

Chandidas wrote his *Sri Krishna-kirtana* in the 14th century. He also popularised the Krishnalila, the Sport of Krishna in Vrindavana.

Thus before the advent of Sri Krishna Chaitanya, the field was ready for the Radhakrishna cult of love and devotion

♣ Reproduced from August 1958 issue of *The Vedanta Kesari*.

Chaitanya was born in the 15th century (in 1484 or 1485 A.D.), in the holy Phalguni Purnima in Navadvipa in West Bengal, amidst the constant Sankirtana and the sound of the name of Hari. The present Navadvipa, according to some scholars, was a part of the original Navadvipa but the actual place of birth was washed away by the Ganga. Chaitanya's parents, Jagannatha Misra and Sachi Devi, hailed from the district of Sylhet, now in Bangladesh. His life shows three periods viz. (1) the first twenty-four years from his birth to the time of his entering the monastic order; (2) the next six years of pilgrimage to South and North India; and (3) the last eighteen years which were spent in Puri.

Chaitanya was known as Viswambhara, and also as Gauranga because he was of fair complexion, and Nimai because he was born under a Neem tree. The saying, 'The child is father of the man,' was perfectly corroborated in his case. One day a Brahmin came to their house as a guest, cooked his own food and offered it to his Chosen Deity. But strangely enough, as soon as he offered, the boy went stealthily and began to eat! It happened thrice like this. Then the Brahmin had a vision and understood that it was his Chosen Deity who had incarnated in this form. This phenomenon was seen in the case of some other great souls also. About the divine status of Sri Chaitanya his followers believe that 'Sri Krishna wanted to taste and enjoy His own sweetness as Radha did. But this could not be done to the fullest extent unless Krishna were infatuated with Himself as Radha had been. Accordingly He assumed a form in which all the aspects of the Krishna of Vrindavana and those of Radha co-existed; and in this aspect Krishna enjoyed His own charm and sweetness. This form is known as Sri Gauranga, who was a blending of Radha and Krishna. About his divine qualities,

it is said that as an energetic boy when Nimai would grow boisterous and uncontrollable, the embarrassed mother would chant the name of Hari, and the boy would be silent like the boy Vivekananda with the name of Shiva.

As a student Gauranga was exceptionally brilliant and in a short time became a great scholar in different branches of Sanskrit studies. He had his schooling under the famous Raghunatha Shiromani. He started a Sanskrit school and began to teach different subjects. During this time a great scholar named Keshava Mishra came from Kashmir and though hitherto undefeated was done so by Gauranga. When his elder brother Vishvarupa renounced the world, Gauranga married Lakshmi Devi to console his mother. At her death he married the devotional Vishnupriya. To perform the ceremonies after the death of his father he went at his twenty-second year to Gaya. There he met Isvara Puri, a disciple of the great Madhavendra Puri. Gauranga returned to Nadia but he was a changed man. Tears rolled down his eyes every now and then and the name of Hari always was on his lips. He stopped his Sanskrit school and began to spread the name of Lord Hari through the length and breadth of the land. He visited the then East Bengal to see his relatives and made thousands mad with the name of Krishna. In the Navadvipa city he conquered the heart of all, even the hostile ruffians like Jagai and Madhai. The Kazi, the Muslim Governor, could not tolerate this movement where even the Muslims would join. So he passed an order that there must not be any sound of the drum anywhere in his area. All the devotees were sorry and did not know what they should do. Gauranga went to the house of the Kazi with his Sankirtana party and transformed him into a devotee.

At this time Gauranga found that he could no longer pull on in the ordinary life.

So he renounced his family and entered the monastic life initiated by Keshava Bharati, another disciple of Madhavendra Puri. So at his twenty-fourth year, Gauranga became Sri Krishna Chaitanya. But he had a great love for his mother, so partly because of her direction and partly because of his love for his devotees in Bengal, he decided to stay at Nilachala (Puri), the place of Lord Jagannatha. Every year the devotees would go there to meet him. He, however, went out on an extensive tour in South and North India. In the South, he visited Vijayanagara, Srisaila, Tirupati, Kanchi, Srirangam (staying there for four months), Sethubandha, Cape Comorin, Udupi, and returned via Maharashtra and Vijayanagara. In the North, he visited Kasi, Allahabad and Vrindavana. Everywhere he went, he sang the Hari Sankirtana. There was a great effect of his preaching, so much so that in U.P. there is still a village called the Pathan-Vaishnava grama, full of Vaishnavas who were Muslims. Till his passing away in 1533, possibly in the waters of the sea, many disciples came to him at Puri and were blessed with divine realisation.

Of the associates of Chaitanya, Nityananda the Avadhuta, Advaita the old Vaishnava, Vasudeva Sarvabhauma the great scholar, Ramananda Ray the exponent of Vaishnava mysticism, were already very famous. The Vaishnava philosophy was developed later by Rupa, Sanatana, Jiva Goswami, Baladeva Vidyabhushana, Viswanatha Chakravarti and others. The anecdotes of Chaitanya's life were recorded by Krishnadasa Kaviraja, Vrindavanadasa, Lochanadasa and others. Of these Krishnadasa's *Chaitanya Charitamrita* is not only a life but a handbook of practical mysticism and is a great authority with the Bengal Vaishnavas.

Sri Chaitanya himself did not compose much excepting the *Sikshashtakam* and

also the *Sri Jagannathastotram* in Sanskrit. In the latter he prayed fervently, 'O Lord Jagannatha, kindly let me have Thy vision'. In his *Sikshashtaka*, he gives the cardinal virtues of a Vaishnava thus:

Humbler than the grass, more tolerant than the tree, giving up all egotism and paying respects to all, a man should sing of Hari.

This is the ideal which still rules all the Vaishnavas and which they still try to maintain even through unfavourable circumstances. In another verse he prays:

Oh Lord, I do not hanker after wealth, men, beautiful wife, nor even the all-knowingness. Oh Lord, see that I get the motiveless devotion in every life of mine.

Two of the great contributions of Sri Chaitanya are the discovery through mystic vision of many of the places of interest in Vrindavana connected with Sri Krishna and the recognition of the singing of Divine Name alone as a valid sadhana. As a result, he may be described as the prophet of Divine Name. His disciple Haridasa was a great exemplar of the efficacy of Divine Name. His philosophical system is known as *Achintyabhedabhedavada*.

Sri Chaitanya teaches us that the rational attributes of men are not capable of approaching the Divine sphere of spirits. Yukti, as he styles reason, is quite incompetent in such a matter. Ruchi, the religious sentiment in men, even in very small quantity, has the power to comprehend God. It is the mystic inspiration that can give light in spiritual matters. Inspirations exhibited themselves in the Vedas, which with the explanatory Puranas are the only evidence in matters of spirit and are eternal in nature. Reason only helps the growth of faith. 'Krishna can be reached through faith and not by logic', is the opinion of Chaitanya. The Shastras according to Chaitanya teach nine principal doctrines:

(1) Hari is one without a second. (2) He is always vested with infinite power. (3) He is the ocean of Rasa or enjoyable spiritual feelings. (4) The soul is His separated part. (5) Certain souls are engrossed by Prakriti or His illusory energy. (6) Certain souls are released from the grasp of Prakriti. (7) Devotion is the only means of attaining the final, object of spiritual existence. (8) Overflowing love for Krishna is alone the final object of spiritual significance. (9) All spiritual and material phenomena are manifestations of Hari, the manifestation, which can neither be said to be different from nor identical with the Almighty. The Vedas go sometimes to establish that Jiva is distinct from the Deity, and sometimes that Jiva is the same as the Deity. The Vedas always reveal the truth. Jiva is simultaneously distinct from and identical with God.

According to *Bhagavata*, devotion is of two kinds, Vaidhi and Raganuga. In a sloka (3.1.5) it says that man without a natural desire for Krishna adores him in obedience to the bidding of the Shastras. Such Bhakti is called Vaidhi. In 3. 25. 35., it says that in the path of inclination (raga) he takes Krishna as the object of his chief emotion, viz. as master, comrade, child or lover. From the sprout of love (prema) issue two things, addiction (rati) and emotion (bhava).

Cultivation of the intimate feeling for Krishna is performed in nine different ways: (1) To hear of the spiritual name, form, attribute and sport of Krishna, (2) to utter His name and sing about Krishna with an especial stress on Kirtana, (3) to meditate on and reiterate all the exploits of Krishna, (4) service of His Holy Feet, (5) worship, (6) bowing down, (7) doing everything that pleases Him, (8) friendship, (9) surrender.

Devotion can be practised having different attitudes towards Krishna. These attitudes are of five different types possessing

different elements of love in an ascending order. The attitudes are: (1) Shanta or calm attitude, as was seen in the cases of Rishis worshipping Rama. In this attitude there is devotion to God as well as conquest of desire. (2) Dasya or the attitude of a servant, as was in Hanuman. In it the above elements as well as service to Him were manifest. (3) Sakhya or the attitude of a friend, as was in the cases of Subala, Sudama and Arjuna. The extra factor of reliance on Him was there. (4) Vatsalya or the attitude of a parent, as was in the cases of Yasoda' and Nanda. In it over and above the preceding elements, tenderness for God developed. (5) Madhura or the attitude of a lover, as was seen in the cases of Radha and the Gopis. It has the sixth element of love and forgetting of one's self. These attitudes are taken from the analogy of worldly relations though they are all spiritual and have no body idea.

Devotion in its highest stage is higher than Mukti or liberation from the world. As Sri Ramakrishna would quote a Vaishnava dictum:

I am not stringent in giving liberation
but I am so in the case of devotion.

To achieve this devotion the devotee undergoes severe anguish from the separation of the Lord. This is described as 'pain of God' in mystical literature. Sri Chaitanya underwent different stages of realisation and suffered or enjoyed the corresponding suffering or bliss. Sri Ramakrishna described the God-intoxicated state of Sri Chaitanya in the following words:

What is this divine intoxication? In this state a man forgets the world. He also forgets his own body, which is so dear to all. Chaitanya had this intoxication. He plunged into the ocean not knowing that it was the ocean. He dashed himself again and again on the ground. He was not aware of hunger, of

thirst, or of sleep. He was not at all conscious of any such thing as his body.

Chaitanyadeva used to experience three moods. In the inmost mood he would be absorbed in samadhi, unconscious of the outer world. In the semi-conscious mood he would dance in ecstasy but could not talk. In the conscious mood he would sing the glories of God.

Sri Chaitanya believed in teaching by the example of his own life. His personal life was very rigid and his followers also practised hard austerity. He became a spiritual dynamo, so much so that even by an indirect touch he could change a man's life, as was evident in the cases of the fishermen and Prataparudra. Once in an ecstatic mood Chaitanya fell in the sea and was caught in the net of some fishermen. Even this indirect touch created such an upsurge of divine emotion in them that their whole lives were changed. King Prataparudra was anxious to see Chaitanya, but the latter would not meet the king. His devotees wanted to help the king. They sent his son, a small boy, who was embraced by Chaitanya, making him divinely mad with the name of Krishna.

The king embraced his son and got the same results.

Seeing Sri Chaitanya's fervour of devotion alone the truths of the scriptures became real to his followers. Even if there was no Radha, here was a soul which underwent all the realisations written in the Shastras. In some mood he would dance, sometimes sing, sometimes weep, and with him danced, sang and wept for God the whole of Bengal, Orissa and Assam for a pretty long time. Even now in these provinces villagers assemble together and have the Namasankirtana, the singing of the name of the Lord in groups which is a special contribution of his. His life and message had a tremendous impact on the society. As a result it became liberal and escaped the danger of total conversion to an alien faith. Sri Chaitanya thus was a great social reformer and he is remembered, followed and worshipped by thousands of people as a great devotee, a founder of the Bhakti cult, a prophet of Divine Name, nay, as an Incarnation of the Lord Himself. *

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I, Swami Vimurtananda, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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All is One

GOKULMUTHU NARAYANASWAMY

‘There exists only One, and not two. It is Satchidananda alone that has taken all these various forms; He alone has become the world and its living beings.’¹ This idea occurs repeatedly in the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. This idea occurs again and again in the Upanishads, Gita, other Hindu Scriptures and in the teachings of various Hindu saints.

This statement can be understood from two different stand points – the Absolute (paramarthika, nirguna) point of view and from the Relative (vyavaharika, saguna) point of view.

Oneness of Nirguna Brahman

All the four cardinal statements (mahavakyas) taken from the four different Vedas indicate the Oneness of Nirguna Brahman. In fact, there are innumerable such statements. The four taken are only representative. For analysis here, we take the statement ‘Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma’ from the Taittiriya Upanishad.²

The statement says that reality (Brahman) is pure Existence (Sat or Satyam), Consciousness (Cit or Jnanam) and Infinite (Ananda or Anantam). Here is a way to understand this.

A. Satyam

What we see as the world is based on the sense organs and the instruments that extend the sense organs. The human eye can see only a limited range of frequencies. Similarly the ears can hear only a limited range. There are

other animals which have a different range of vision and sound. Also, they have much more powerful sense of smell than us. So their world is an entirely different one. For example, when a cat enters a room, it knows who was sitting in the sofa an hour back based on the smell. It also knows if you have gone to the park or not based on the smell of the flowers on you. Sharks can detect the electrical current in the bodies of animals swimming in the water a few meters away. Even with all the modern technology to extend our access to the various physical phenomenon in the world, there is no reason to assume that what we detect in the world is all that actually exists. There can be entirely new kinds of matter and energy that until now we do not have senses or instruments to detect.

What we see and interpret depends on the state of our mind. If we like someone, we see them as beautiful. The chemicals and hormones in our blood affect the way we think and judge. Also, all our past experiences affects our interpretation of the people, objects and situations in the world. Thus, though the world seems to appear outside us objectively, what we know of the world is only what our instruments (senses and mind) show us. We have no access to the reality as it is. This fundamental reality is referred to as Existence.

What is the nature of Existence which is beyond these apparent properties like colour, sound, smell, mass, temperature, charge, momentum, etc.? We know that these

❦ Sri Gokulmuthu N. works as a software engineer in Bengaluru.

properties are all emergent phenomenon. When we look at things at their minutest constituents known today like quarks and leptons, these properties do not exist. There are a different set of fundamental properties, which give rise to the perceivable properties at various composite grosser levels.

Vedanta extends this concept and says, 'As long as properties are experienced, you have not reached the most fundamental level.' So, every property is only an emergent phenomenon. At the ultimate fundamental level, Existence would necessarily be free from any properties. Vedanta gives an example to understand this: pot-ness does not exist in the clay out of which pot is made.

This fundamental entity, of which the whole universe is made, is called Sat or Satyam. It cannot have any properties (nirguna). Any two objects are distinguished only based on properties. As Sat does not have any properties, It has to be only one (ekam eva advitiam). Any change is only change of properties. So Sat has to be changeless (nirvikara). Changeless with respect to space and time. So Sat is all-pervading (sarvagata) and eternal (nityam). Parts of an entity are based on properties of constituents. So Sat is partless (akhanda). So, Sat is One, Infinite, All-pervading, Eternal, Changeless, Partless, Property-less, Absolute Existence.

B. Jnanam

Let us analyse the subject-object relationship in perception. When I see a flower, I (subject) am the body, including the eye. The flower is the object. Form and colour of the flower are properties. When I want to judge the properties of the eye like myopia or colour-blindness, I come one step inward. The eye is the object. 'I', including the mind, is the subject. Extending this further, the real

'I' is the ultimate subject, which can never become an object of perception by the senses or conception by the mind.³ This ultimate subject is called Cit or Jnanam.

In any subject-object relationship, properties always belong to the object. To judge the property of anything, it has to be given the status of an object. I need to extend myself to the edge of the instrument that is in contact with the object (internal or external) to experience and evaluate the properties of the object. Thus, I, the Cit, being the ultimate subject, cannot have any properties.

Applying the same logic that we applied to Sat, Cit also is One, Infinite, All-pervading, Eternal, Changeless, Partless, Property-less, Absolute Existence. So, Sat and Cit are not different. They are the same entity.

Thus, real I, the Consciousness is the fundamental entity from which the whole universe has emerged. This is what is conveyed in innumerable *mahavakya* statements in the Upanishads belonging to various Vedas.

C. Anantam

To understand the relationship between the infinite (Anantam) Sat-Cit and the finite world, let us take an example.

We have the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, ... The existence of these finite numbers indicate that we can go on counting forever. So we have the concept of "infinity" in mathematics. From the point of view of infinity, we cannot distinguish finite numbers like 1, 2, 3, etc. This can be seen from the equation:

$$\text{inf} - 1 = \text{inf} - 2$$

Thus, from the point of view of infinity, 1, 2, 3, etc do not exist as discrete numbers. As the number line is homogeneous, any point on it is only imaginary. There is really no difference between one point and another point.

Thus, from the point of view of the infinite, finite does not exist. But from the point of view of finite, the infinite exists.

Now, we can apply the same logic to the whole of existence. We have seen that Sat-Cit is the Infinite. The world that we see is finite. From the point of view of infinite Sat-Cit, the finite world does not exist. From the point of view of the finite world, the existence of infinite Sat-Cit cannot be denied. So, Sat-Cit has absolute existence and the empirical world has only relative existence.

This relationship between the infinite and finite is called Maya.

Sankara's Summary

The three points we have seen here has been summarized as the three famous statements by Sri Sankaracharya:

❖ Brahma satyam (from A) – Infinite Consciousness is the fundamental reality.

❖ Jagat mitya (from C) – The finite universe is a relative appearance.

❖ Jivah Brahma eva na aparah (from B) – The real 'I' is not different from Infinite Consciousness.

Oneness of Saguna Brahman

Taittiriya Upanishad verses 2.1 to 2.5, Gita 18.14-15 and Gita 15.13-16 give details of five aspects of the individual (vyashti) and the whole (samasthi). These are popularly called the five sheaths (panca kosha).

It should also be noted that, at every level, the individual is not independent or apart from the whole. The individual and the whole are inseparable. The very concept of individuality is only a convention. When we give too much importance to the individuality, it is Ignorance (avidya) and it is the cause of bondage (samsara). When we realize that the

Whole alone is real and individuality is unreal, it leads to liberation (mukti).

Physical Sheath

The physical body is made of physical matter. The physical body is an integral part of the physical Universe. Every moment millions of molecules from the rest of the physical Universe become a part of the body and millions are shed away from the body. The physical body has no independent existence apart from the physical Universe.

Physiological Sheath

The human being is considered to be 'alive.' By the same perspective, every cell in the human being is also an independent living being. What we call as the living human being is a collection of millions of living human cells and also millions of bacteria and other living beings that have permanent and temporary home in the human body (without which, the human body cannot be alive). When a cell which is a living being divides, it becomes two living beings. One living being arises out of another living being. When the live seed or stick of a plant is buried in the soil, it becomes another plant. Looking at all these, we can see clearly that the concept of an "individual" living being is very vague. Every living being is an inseparable part of the whole living Universe. There is only One life in the whole of existence, which manifests through the lives of the millions of living things. This is beautifully presented in the Gita 15.13-14. Krishna, representing the living Universe, says, 'I manifest as food in the outside world and also I am the digestive force eating the food from within the living beings.' This is mentioned in the Purusha Suktam, Narayana Suktam, Gita 11.23, Gita 13.14 and so many other verses in the various Hindu scriptures as the Universal

being with thousands of eyes, ears, hands and feet in all directions.

Mental Sheath

The same concept can be extended to emotions also. We use expressions like 'India condemns the acts of terrorism in Europe', 'India grieves with the near and dear ones of the children killed in the school shootout in US', etc. The emotions of the country is usually considered as the collective emotions of the people of the country. Looking at how in the case of the physical and physiological levels, the individuality was only a reflection of the whole, here also, we can consider the individual emotions as reflection of the collective emotion. The whole Universe is not only 'living', it is also 'feeling.' The Universe feels through the minds of the individuals. The feelings of the Universal reflects in the minds of the individuals. This is mentioned in Gita 15.7.

Intellectual Sheath

The same concept can be extended to intellect also. The whole Universe is one learning entity. As time proceeds, the Universe experiments and learns through the activities of all human beings and other living things. What is seen as the intellect of people is only a reflection of the Universal intellect. This is beautifully given in the Gita 15.15, 'I am seated in the hearts of all beings and manifest as memory, knowledge and forgetfulness. I am all that has to be known. I am the knowledge and I am the knower too.'

Causal Sheath

The same concept can be extended to free-will and the fruits of action also. The storage of tendencies (samskara) and fruits of action (karma) is called the causal body

(karana sharira) or sheath of bliss (ananda maya kosha). The individual tendencies and fruits of action are integral parts of the Universal collection of tendencies and fruits of action. Thus, the whole Universe has its dynamics and evolution. This Universal being is referred to in the Gita 15.16 and 8.18-20. This Being is eternal. Even when the whole physical Universe gets destroyed and recycled, the collective tendencies and fruits of action cannot be destroyed. They remain in dormant form to be the cause of the next manifestation of the Universe.

Universal Being

Thus, Vedanta presents the whole Universe as one living Being who feels, thinks and wills. Every individual is an inseparable part of the whole. The materiality, life, feeling, thought and will of the Universal Being reflects in the individual. Every thought and action of every individual is a contribution to the Universal Being.

This concept of the Universal Being is the basis of all morality and religion. In his 1930 Hibbert Lectures at Oxford titled 'The Religion of Man', Rabindranath Tagore calls this Universal Being as 'Man' (with an upper case M). He says, 'The individual man must exist for Man the great, and must express him in disinterested works, in science and philosophy, in literature and arts, in service and worship. This is his religion, which is working in the heart of all his religions in various names and forms.... Creation has been made possible through the continual self-surrender of the unit to the universe. And the spiritual universe of Man is also ever claiming self-renunciation from the individual unit.'⁴

It is this Universal Being that the Hindus worship through various names, forms, incarnations and saints. It is this Being that

the Hindus serve by morality, kindness, self-control, social service, charity, etc.

According to Hindus, it is this same Universal Being that the Jews call Jehova, Christians call Father and Muslims call Allah.

Oneness of Nirguna Brahman and Saguna Brahman

The Absolute Consciousness is called Nirguna Brahman. The Universal Being is called Saguna Brahman. The relationship between them is Maya. Thus, Nirguna Brahman with Maya is called Saguna Brahman. Maya is called the Sakti of Nirguna Brahman. They are inseparable.

Superficially and logically, the Absolute and Relative seem to be totally unrelated. Swami Vivekananda was asked repeatedly by different people in India and abroad about the relationship between the Absolute and the Relative in different words. This cannot be answered based on logic. His answer was always to the same effect. Here is a sample of his answer. 'The question — what is the cause of Maya (illusion)? — has been asked for the last three thousand years; and the only answer is: when the world is able to formulate a logical question, we shall answer it. The question is contradictory. Our position is that the Absolute has become this relative only apparently, that the Unconditioned has become the conditioned only in Maya. By the very admission of the Unconditioned, we admit that the Absolute cannot be acted upon by anything else. It is uncaused, which means that nothing outside Itself can act upon It. . . In the Unconditioned there cannot be time, space, or causation. That granted your question will be: "What caused that which cannot be caused by anything to be changed into this?" Your question is only possible in the conditioned. But you take it out of the conditioned, and want to ask it in the

Unconditioned. Only when the Unconditioned becomes conditioned, and space, time, and causation come in, can the question be asked. We can only say ignorance makes the illusion. The question is impossible. Nothing can have worked on the Absolute. There was no cause. Not that we do not know, or that we are ignorant; but It is above knowledge, and cannot be brought down to the plane of knowledge.'⁵ The Absolute and Relative are inseparable. So there cannot be a causal relationship between them.

Sri Ramakrishna says, 'That which is Brahman is also Kali, the Mother, the Primal Energy. When inactive It is called Brahman. Again, when creating, preserving, and destroying, It is called Sakti. Still water is an illustration of Brahman. The same water, moving in waves, may be compared to Sakti, Kali.'⁶ This idea is found repeatedly in the Gospel at several places.

Sri Ramakrishna elaborates this beautifully in his own characteristic manner in his conversation with Keshab Chandra Sen:

'The jnanis, who adhere to the non-dualistic philosophy of Vedanta, say that the acts of creation, preservation, and destruction, the universe itself and all its living beings, are the manifestations of Sakti, the Divine Power. (Known as Maya in the Vedanta philosophy.) If you reason it out, you will realize that all these are as illusory as a dream. Brahman alone is the Reality, and all else is unreal. Even this very Sakti is unsubstantial, like a dream.

'But though you reason all your life, unless you are established in samadhi, you cannot go beyond the jurisdiction of Sakti. Even when you say, "I am meditating," or "I am contemplating," still you are moving in the realm of Sakti, within Its power.

'Thus Brahman and Sakti are identical. If you accept the one, you must accept the other. It is like fire and its power to burn. If you see

the fire, you must recognize its power to burn also. You cannot think of fire without its power to burn, nor can you think of the power to burn without fire. You cannot conceive of the sun's rays without the sun, nor can you conceive of the sun without its rays.

'Thus one cannot think of Brahman without Sakti, or of Sakti without Brahman. One cannot think of the Absolute without the Relative, or of the Relative without the Absolute.

'The Primordial Power is ever at play. (This idea introduces the elements of spontaneity and freedom in the creation.) She is creating, preserving, and destroying in play, as it were. This Power is called Kali. Kali is verily Brahman, and Brahman is verily Kali. It is one and the same Reality. When we think of It as inactive, that is to say, not engaged in the acts of creation, preservation, and destruction, then we call It Brahman. But when It engages in these activities, then we call It Kali or Sakti. The Reality is one and the same; the difference is in name and form.'⁷

Thus, the whole finite universe of name (conception by mind) and form (perception by senses) exists as an apparent emergent phenomenon in the pure infinite Consciousness. The Consciousness reflected on a particular body-mind complex is called Jivatma. The Consciousness reflected on the whole universe is called Paramatma or Ishvara.⁸

Thus, the Absolute Reality is not in conflict with the Relative Reality. They are complementary to each other. From both viewpoints, God alone is real. It is God alone who has become this world and its living beings. This allows us to deal with the everyday life in the world.

Freedom

Liberation (mukti) is freedom from the psychological defects like insecurity, anxiety, sorrow, fear and desire and complete dissolution of identity.

From the Absolute point of view, the whole universe exists in Me, the pure Consciousness, as a relative appearance. My existence is of a higher order of reality compared to the world. Vedanta gives an example to understand this: When a rope is mistakenly perceived as a snake in dim light, the rope is not affected by the perceived snake. The world and its problems cannot affect me, just like the water in the movie does not wet the screen on which it is projected. The world is just a relative emergent superimposition which exists using me, the Sat-Cit-Ananda – Infinite Conscious Existence, as the support. This understanding frees me from all psychological defects.

From the Relative point of view, my individuality is only a notion. It is only the Universal Being that exists. My body, life, mind, intellect and will are reflections of the Universal Being only. These are neither me nor mine. My duty is to surrender completely to the Lord and do justice to every situation in life as much as possible as an offering to the Universal Being. It is the Lord Himself who experiences the world through me and expresses through me. This understanding also frees me from all psychological defects.

In both cases, the individual identity is dissolved. Thus, 'All is One' at both Absolute and Relative levels. Realizing them is freedom. *

References 1. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, 746 [hereafter *Gospel*] 2. *Taittiriya Upanishad*, verse 2.1.1 3. *Drg Drsya Viveka* - 1-5 4. *Bhagavad Gita*, 4, 5, 11 5. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 5: 276 6. *Gospel*, 634 7. *Gospel*, 134-135 8. *Tattvabodha*, 4.3-4

Heritage ~ Heroes

Holi or Holika, also called holikotsava, is an extremely popular festival observed throughout India. The festival, popularly associated with Sri Krishna is mentioned in very early religious texts such as Jaimini's Purva-mimamsa-sutras and Kathaka-grihya-sutras.

There are no austere religious observances on this day. Generally a log of wood is kept in a prominent public place. People go on throwing twigs of trees etc on to that log which gradually grows into a sizeable heap. On the night just before the Phalguna-purnima day, it is set fire to in a simple ceremony.

According to the puranas it was on this day that Lord Shiva opened his third eye and reduced Kamadeva to ashes. Holi festival therefore involves the ritual of setting fire to a woodpile. Another story is that Holika, sister of Hiranyakashipu, had agnisiddhi, i.e she could not be burnt by fire. On her brother's orders she tried to kill his son Prahlada by taking him on her lap and sitting on a pyre of wood. But she herself was reduced to ashes and Prahlada was unhurt. Fire wood is burnt in memory of this. The third story is that of an ogress called Dhundhi who in the reign of king Raghu in Satyayuga, killed children. She had obtained a boon by which she could not be killed by young or old men, devatas or any animal. So the king sent some boys to capture her. They lit a big fire, danced frenziedly,

shouting and abusing Dhundhi. Frightened, she left the human world forever. In memory of this came the practice of Holi fire.

The day after Phalguna-purnima, is observed as a day of revelry, especially by throwing on one another coloured powder or coloured water. Sri Krishna is said to have popularised this revelry by playing pranks on the gopis. In Bengal the festival is observed as Dol Purnima or Dol Yatra.

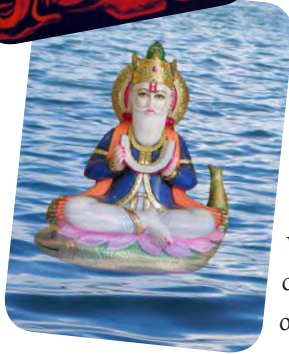
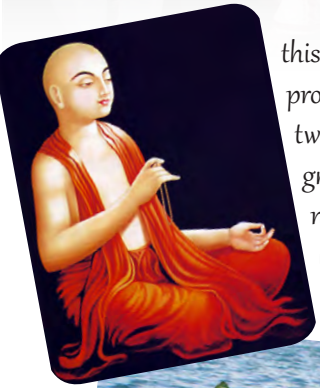
Ugadi or **Candramana Yugadi** is the New Year Day widely celebrated in Karnataka, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. It is the first day of the bright half of the month of Caitra (March-April). Brahma, the Creator, is said to have created this world on this day. The reckoning of time began from the sunrise

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* SOME SPECIAL DAYS *

- 12 *Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Jayanti*
- Dol Purnima*
- 13 *Holi*
- 16 *Swami Yogananda Jayanti*
- 28 *Gudi Padwa*
- 29 *Ugadi, Cheti Chand*



on this day. The day is therefore called 'yugadi'—beginning of an era. It is also on this day that emperor Salivahana was crowned. Hence this era is called the Saka Era or the Salivahana Saka.

On this day people take 'abhyanjanasana or 'oil bath', wear new clothes, decorate the house, eat a mixture of tender neem leaves and jaggery followed by a sumptuous feast. The mixture of neem and jaggery is good for health and also symbolically represents the willingness and courage to accept the sweet and bitter experiences of life with equanimity.

In Maharashtra a long bamboo is decorated with a green or yellow silk cloth and a silver or copper vessel is put over it. A garland of sweets and neem leaves is tied at the upper end. This is called 'gudhi.' This is then worshipped and hoisted on the terrace of the house. This is the most important event of the day. The gudhi is taken down after sunset and the sweets and neem leaves are distributed among all as prasada. Because of the custom of raising the gudhi on the padwa day, this Ugadi day is known as **Gudhi Padwa** in Maharashtra.

Cheti Chand is the Sindhi New Year day. It falls on the same day as Ugadi or on the next day. Cheti Chand is also the birthday of Lal Sain Amaralal, popularly known as Ishtadev Jhulelal or Uderolal, the patron saint of Sindhis. Born in the 10th century as an incarnation of Water God, Lord Jhulelal saved the Sindhis from the tyranny of a fanatic ruler who forced Sindhis to convert to Islam. Sindhis observe a 40-day penance Chaliho Sahab with strict austerities and prayers. Cheti Chand day marks the end of this penance when they go in a procession, carrying an image of Jhulelal, to a nearby water body and offer worship to the Water God.

Swami Yogananda

'Sir, could you teach me how to conquer lust?' asked the young disciple. 'Chant the name of Hari, then it will go,' answered the Master. Though unconvinced with this simple remedy, the young lad took the name of the Lord with a concentrated mind and soon had tangible results. This was Swami Yogananda, one of the six direct-disciples recognised by Sri Ramakrishna as an ishwarakoti—a godlike soul, born to do good to humanity.

He had a burning renunciation and practised japam and meditation for many hours. Due to intense fasting his body was lean, but his face would always look serene and luminous. While at Varanasi, he would beg for food once a day and sometimes eat dry bread soaked in water for two or three days! An uncompromising monk, he shunned everything that took his mind away from his Master.

He was the first initiated disciple of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi. He served her with utmost devotion. He was so respectful towards Holy Mother that he would not salute her by touching her feet. When the Mother would leave the place, he would touch that spot with his head. Asked about this strange behaviour, he replied: 'What! I don't have the audacity to keep the Mother standing and waiting for me so that I may bow down to her.' *

The Message of Bhagavad-Gita

SWAMI TYAGARUPANANDA

The Bhagavad-Gita is one of the most respected religious books of the Hindus. Normally we associate a religious act with temples or places of pilgrimage. Yet in this book, the backdrop is a fearful battlefield.

Just when the battle was about to start – Arjuna, the best of the Pandava warriors asked his charioteer, Sri Krishna, to place his chariot between the two armies of the Kauravas and the Pandavas. As he saw the huge army on both sides, he was suddenly overcome with remorse. Was this battle really necessary? Such a large number of people would be killed! Why not turn back the wheels and desist from fighting the battle, thus trying to bring in peace? Arjuna became a mass of confusion trying to mentally undo the lengthy preparations that had been done! The chieftains fighting for the Pandavas had been invited by Arjuna and his brothers to help them. And yet, he now felt that deciding to fight had been a wrong decision! What could he do now? Unable to solve this dilemma, he sank in his chariot. His famous bow, the Gandhiva, lay abandoned by his side. In desperation, he surrendered to his friend and mentor Sri Krishna praying for guidance.

This situation is similar to a present day student suddenly getting nervous just before an important examination. As he remembers the large syllabus that he has to cover, he feels ill-equipped to appear for the test. He even thinks of skipping the examination and

brings in arguments justifying his weakness. In a similar fashion, in different events of our lives, we take a decision and are then unnerved when the full consequence of our decision unfolds itself. We develop cold feet and are overcome with doubt as we perceive the negative consequences of our action. It is then that we backtrack and are not able to execute our original plan.

What does a good teacher do when he sees his student in such a predicament? How can he remove this depression which has engulfed the mind of the student and turn it in a positive direction? Sri Krishna, one of the greatest of teachers, starts with a severe scolding, 'This imbecility does not befit you, O Partha! Give up this weakness of the heart and rise up, O scorcher of foes!'

This verse was very dear to Swami Vivekananda and he would often quote it to raise the masses from their state of inaction. A great person too has his moments of weakness when he sinks into a state of stupor; a tremendous effort is then necessary to pull him out of that condition. Arjuna was a great warrior and also endowed with a strong sense of ethics. It was thus that this 'dilemma of the gentleman' seized him and would not allow him to perform his duty — the duty of the warrior, of the *kshatriya*. Sri Krishna therefore had to scold him in very strong terms and remind him of his strength, of his great potential.

☞ Swami Tyagarupananda is a senior sannyasi of the Ramakrishna Order.

But Sri Krishna was practical and understood that this scolding would not be sufficient to engage the reluctant Arjuna in the fearsome Kurushetra battle. He knew that Arjuna had sunk into a state of deep inertia and only work, tremendous activity could raise him from this condition. As a person of the warrior clan, it was his natural duty to fight and adhering to this duty would gradually remove the inertia of his mind. But such activity would involve him in confrontation, in killing of his own people. So, Sri Krishna introduced the eternal teachings of the Vedanta. He argued that the Being that resides in the body, the Atman, is changeless and deathless. It is intrinsically pure and is not affected by the changes in the body as seen in the stages of childhood, youth and old age. Finally, when the body dissolves and stops functioning, the individual self moves to another body to work out its own karma.

This goes on through repeated births and deaths, through many lives till the individual self, the *jivatman* realises its oneness with the *Paramatman* or God and merges with Him. The wise man does not grieve for these changes. Keeping his mind focussed on the ever-pure Atman, he remains strong and unmoved in the midst of the changes in the world.

Such a high ideal is of course very laudable. But as we try to implement these teachings in our lives, we face obstacles. We feel weak and are unable to implement what we know to be correct. Our physical body and our bundle of earlier impressions conspire together to deny us a sincere effort to reach the highest goal. Sometimes, again, the ultimate ideal is not clear to us. Looking around, we find that the vast majority appear to be comfortable in the enjoyments of the world. Why then, our mind revolts, should we sacrifice ourselves to reach up to a high

ideal? What is the tangible profit that we have by slowly burning ourselves in the fire of an inscrutable and utopian ideal?

Such doubts often seize individuals who lead a life of sacrifice and discipline. Overcoming such doubts is a major step towards establishing oneself in the life of spirituality. Our scriptures declare that when such a doubt permeates the society and affects many men and women, the foundation of the society is in danger. God then takes a human form, and suffering all the pains and sorrows of mankind, shows by his own life how we can lead a life of sacrifice and idealism in the midst of the mud and dirt of the world. When people lose hope and become impatient thinking that they have lost out on the enjoyments of the world by adhering to a life of idealism and sacrifice, the *avatara* comes down to show them the proper way. In the dark, difficult path of life when all the lights of inspiration seem to have blown off, the life of the *avatara* stands as a beacon light, showing us the way to truth and bliss.

Sri Krishna speaks about this advent of the incarnation, 'Whenever there is decline of dharma, and rise of adharma, then I manifest Myself in a body.' The Gita speaks of devotion to this incarnation of God. The path of devotion makes the rugged path of duty sweet and palatable. By surrendering ourselves to God, we accept, in a positive manner, things that come to our lot. Instead of blaming ill-luck for what has transpired, instead of lamenting for opportunities not properly utilised, instead of burning with jealousy at the prosperity of others – we look forward to a life of hope, on this very earth. Sri Ramakrishna would often say that as the devotee earnestly prays to this incarnation of God, the accumulated sin in his mind is washed away. His despondency is removed and he looks at the world in a new

light. He remembers that he had weathered many storms of temptations to be the person he is today. He also remembers the many unexpected blessings and gifts that came his way, and the many times that he was saved from the brink of disaster.

Practice of such devotion towards God, a strong adherence to the duties of life, combined with a strong dispassion towards the objects of the enjoyment—these are the means by which the character of a man is formed in course of time.

The man of wisdom has control over his different organs of feeling, touch, smell etc. Even when these sense organs come in contact with their objects, he is able to control the organs as per his will. Such a person of self-control lives a life of great bliss. For his happiness does not depend on the external objects that he perceives. In any adverse situation he quickly regains his mental poise and is able to steer clear of difficulties.

Why do not all men take to such a life of idealism? Although the great men of different religions have again and again spoken of such a life of control and dependence on God, assuring us of the highest bliss that will come in its wake—why do we not feel inclined that way? What is it that hinders our march towards the attainment of a lofty ideal in the world?

The Bhagavad Gita declares that it is desire which prevents man from leading a disciplined life and instead leads him to commit errors and sins, often in spite of himself. This enemy called desire takes the form of anger if not satisfied. This fire of anger can destroy a person and lead him to do things for which he laments later in life. Excessive desire was at the root of the two wars described in the epics—the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. In the story of the Ramayana,

the lustful desire of Ravana lead to the abduction of Sita and finally to the Ramayana war. In the story of the Mahabharata, the lust and desire of the Kauravas lead to the insulting of Draupadi and finally to the all-destroying Kurukshetra war.

Such desires can be conquered by surrendering them totally to God. Just as the ocean takes into its bosom all kinds of water, dirty or pure, so also God the ever compassionate one takes over the responsibilities of men if they surrender to him. Sincere dependence on God makes the life of man blessed. Such dependence can only be developed with great effort – with repeated exertions and a positive dispassion towards the fleeting objects of enjoyment.

Again there are others who though respectful towards an ideal, do not put in sufficient efforts to reach the final goal. Somehow, they lose steam half-way and drift again into a life of worldliness. What then is the fate of such a person whose mind drifts away from yoga? Do all his earlier efforts go in vain? Are they like the dark monsoon clouds which are carried away by a strong wind and do not give any rains? Do they remain fruitless, like a narrow stream gradually drying up in a large desert?

When Arjuna poses this doubt, Sri Krishna forcefully promises that such a person, a devotee of the Lord, can never go to ruin. He asserts that neither in this world nor in the next, can ill-fate be there for such a person who has given a large part of his life to actualise a lofty ideal. Indeed, Sri Ramakrishna has said that if a man moves one step towards God, then in supreme love, God moves hundred steps towards him. God is also eager to receive the love of his devotees and he is exceedingly happy to be in their company. Hence even if a devotee slips and moves away from God, he,

like the caring mother, is ever ready to remove the dirt and take the devotee once more in his lap. He also remembers the past good actions performed and efforts undertaken. Again, such efforts are like guardian angels, whose memory reminds the man again and again that he can, with but a little effort, move again into the blessed life untouched by the dirt of the mundane world.

Sri Ramakrishna has repeatedly stressed on surrendering oneself to God. He says that one should try to be like the leaf on which food has been eaten, and which is carried by the wind hither and thither. Just as such a leaf has no conscious effort of its own, so should be a real devotee of God –surrendering himself fully to God. Only then does God come forward to take complete charge of the devotee. Sri Krishna, in the Gita, also speaks of such complete dependence on God. Sometimes, in a complex situation, a person is bewildered with the different alternatives that are on hand. After deciding on a particular course of action, he does a rethinking as the other alternatives gradually seize his mind. Such indeed had been the predicament of Arjuna— he was at a loss about what should be done as he faced a gruesome yet righteous battle against his own kith and kin. Like the bird in the parable which is unable to find its abode even when it flows in all the four directions from the mast of the ship which is in the midst of the ocean, Arjuna was at a loss about the right course to be undertaken, on the eve of the battle of Kurukshetra. Sri Krishna then tells him, 'Give up all works whether right or wrong and take refuge only in Me. I will certainly take you beyond all sins, do not grieve anymore.'

Such a bold statement, promising to bear the entire responsibility of another person, can only be made by the greatest of human beings, the incarnations of God. The advent of such a person brings a new wave of religion in society. Sri Ramakrishna too had asked his devotee, Girish Chandra Ghosh, to give him the 'power of attorney'. This meant, philosophically, the guru's authority to perform all religious actions on behalf of the devotee. The teacher thus draws upon himself the entire effect of the disciple's actions.

The Bhagavad Gita has only seven hundred slokas. Yet it is regarded as containing the essence of the teachings of Hinduism. Its popularity can be ascribed to three factors. Firstly, the teaching is practical. It was delivered for Arjuna, who was a householder and a warrior by training. Secondly, one sees in it all the different paths of Hindu religion viz. devotion, meditation, work and knowledge properly synthesised and made into a philosophy of life suited to the ordinary man. Thirdly, the message is delivered by Sri Krishna, who in his own life stands as a living illustration of karma yoga, the doctrine of selfless work which is the main teaching of this book. It is for these reasons that even though centuries have passed since Sri Krishna instructed Arjuna on the battlefield, people continue to derive inspiration from its teachings. Over the years, many commentaries have been written on this book, showing its relevance to mankind. And yet much remains hidden, waiting to be discovered. *

Recalling Swami Atulananda

HIRONMOY MUKHERJEE

Swami Atulananda, familiarly known as Gurudas Maharaj, was born in 1870 as a son of a prosperous businessman in Amsterdam. His early name was Cornelius J Heijblom. After graduation from an agricultural college, he migrated to the United States before the turn of the century and lived in New York city. He earned his livelihood as an office worker and at times as a coachman or farmhand. A fall from the horse left him with a back injury, which was to trouble him all his life. But he never complained or allowed it to become a handicap to his life.



Swami Atulananda

In 1898, he came in contact with the Vedanta movement in America initiated by Swami Vivekananda whom he met briefly in 1899 and 1900 during Swamiji's second visit to the country. He started regularly attending Sunday lectures delivered by Swami Abhedananda. He lived in close contact with the latter and other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna who worked in the West, especially Swami Turiyananda with whom he worked as a pioneer in the building of 'Shanti Ashrama' in California. He was initiated into brahmacharya by Swami Abhedananda in April 1899 and given the name 'Gurudas' (servant of the Master). His close contact with Swami Turiyananda established him firmly on the spiritual path. When Swami Turiyananda left for India on 6 June 1902 he handed over

the charge of the Ashrama to Gurudas, his favourite disciple.

Gurudas visited India in 1906. One day at Belur Math, Swami Brahmananda, President of Ramakrishna Math and Mission, sent for him. When he went, he found Swami Brahmananda sitting with his brother-disciples Swami Shivananda, Swami Premananda and Swami Abhedananda. Swami Brahmananda then asked him, 'Do you know dancing?' Since Gurudas would not tell a lie, he kept quiet. But Maharaj asked again, 'Tell me, do you know dancing?' Gurudas replied 'Yes Maharaj.' Thereupon Maharaj asked him to dance. When Gurudas asked, 'How can I dance alone?' Maharaj replied, 'Why, take a chair!' Somehow, Gurudas danced and this removed his shyness and helped him to settle into the ashram life.

As Gurudas was a foreigner, some of the monks in Belur Math would hesitate to eat with him using the same plates and cups. This came to the notice of Swami Shivananda. One day after lunch when the monks were moving about, Swami Shivananda, who was sitting on a bench near the old math building, called Gurudas and asked him to sit by his side on the bench. Gurudas came a few steps and stood. Shivanandaji asked him to come still closer and made him sit on the bench,

☯ The author is a devotee of Ramakrishna Math, Nagpur, Maharashtra.

and put his hand over the latter's shoulder. Gurudas sat hesitatingly by his side since the bench was meant only for the direct-disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. The monks standing nearby could not help noticing it. Swami Shivananda was smoking a hubble-bubble. He told Gurudas, 'Do you know I have a frog here? It is my pet frog and it is making some noise.' Gurudas replied, 'No Maharaj, there is water in it and when you inhale it will naturally make some noise.' 'Is it so?' saying so Mahapurush Maharaj handed over the hookah to Gurudas, and asked him to try. As the latter would not take it, he forcibly put it in his mouth and made him inhale it. And soon after, Mahapurush Maharaj snatched the hookah and started smoking from it, although Gurudas insisted on washing it before handing it over to him. It was a symbolic act. The assembled monks realized their mistaken notion about Gurudas Maharaj. While telling the story the latter would become very emotional and say, 'This is how the direct disciples used to teach.'

Once, Swami Turiyananda was lying very ill at the Kankhal ashram. Gurudas and Swami Premananda came to Kankhal to see the Swami. When he was able to walk a little, Swami Turiyananda came to Gurudas' room. Seeing Sri Ramakrishna's photograph on the table Swami Turiyananda said: 'He stands alone; there is none like him. Keshab Chandra Sen one day took him to a photographer. He asked Sri Ramakrishna to stand quietly for a moment. Master obeyed like a child and the picture was taken.' Another day Gurudas found Swami Premananda, Swami Kalyanananda and others in Swami Turiyananda's room. Their talk centered on Swamiji's work in the West. 'Swamiji was fearless', Swami Turiyananda said, 'He always taught the highest truth without compromise.

Always giving, asking nothing in return.' Swami Premananda remarked, 'We have seen two men, our Master and Swamiji. No other man can be compared with them.' Swami Premananda and Swami Turiyananda then sang together in Bengali some of the songs that Sri Ramkrishna used to sing.'

In 1911, Gurudas received initiation from Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother. When the latter initiated him at Udbodhan home, she told him that he could repeat the mantra at all times, but if he really wanted to get the results, he should meditate at set times and concentrate on the meaning of the mantra. When Gurudas Maharaj was later asked how he had felt at the time of his initiation—since neither could he understand Bengali and nor could Holy Mother speak English—he explained, 'When a child sits in the mother's lap, in which language do they converse? Similarly I felt at that time as though the whole world was dissolved, and I was a small baby sitting in the lap of my mother; I felt inebriated, and I had no doubts.'

Wandering in India and living the ascetic Hindu life in regards to diet and other customs broke down Gurudas Maharaj's health and he had to return to America in 1912. He came back to India in 1914 and again was forced to return to America in 1918. Finally he returned to India in 1922 and this time with the wisdom born of experience, he did not try to be completely Indian in diet and way of life. He devised a mean between Western and Indian ways of life which enabled him to live in India till his end.

In 1915 Gurudas Maharaj along with Swami Prabhavananda and others went on the Kedar-Badri pilgrimage in the Himalayas. Being a European, he was not allowed into the Kedarnath temple. When they reached Badrinath, they waited in front of the temple

door along with other pilgrims. As Swami Prabhavananda later narrated, 'A bright looking young priest, about twenty to twenty four years old, beckoned to me. He said, "Ask your friends to come and follow me." He took us to a side of the temple where it was not crowded. When he opened the temple door, some other pilgrims wanted to enter also but he told them, "No, it is not for you." The four of us went in with him and he closed the door behind us. But here is the peculiar thing. Generally a priest stands to one side or in front, facing the deity. But this priest stood in line with the deity, facing us which is never done. We stayed and had our darshan. After a few minutes the priest asked, "Have you had enough darshan?" We came out but the priest did not leave the temple.' Soon after, the swamis were told by the head priest that they could not enter the temple because Gurudas maharaj was a foreigner. They stayed for three days and nights, but never again saw the young priest who had conducted them into the temple.

On the way back when they visited Swami Turiyananda at Almora and told him about the incident, he exclaimed, 'You foolish boys, don't you realize that it was the Lord Himself who came in this garb and took you inside? Didn't you recognize Him?'

Gurudas was initiated into Sannyasa on February 18, 1923 by Swami Abhedananda. An interesting detail regarding this sannyasa initiation is that while Swami Shivananda, as President of the Order, gave initiation to 11 other brahmacharins, Gurudas was initiated by Swami Abhedananda. When asked about it, he said, 'Abhedanandaji was sitting there. Mahapurush Maharaj was also sitting there. As Mahapurush Maharaj was the President, he was giving sannyasa. So everybody went to Mahapurush Maharaj to receive the clothes.

But I straightaway went to Abhedanandaji. He could not refuse. Then the clothes were given to Abhedanandaji and he gave them to me.' When asked whether he did not like Mahapurush Maharaj he clarified, 'No, no, I had no disrespect. I went to Abhedanandaji because I had met him first; I had remained with him; he had given me brahmacharya and he was sitting there. If I had gone to Mahapurush Maharaj to accept sannyasa, what would have Abhedanandaji felt? This was in my mind. So I went to Abhedanandaji.'

Gurudas Maharaj received blessings from several of the Master's direct disciples. One such blessing Gurudas Maharaj indirectly disclosed to one of the attendants. He commented that once he had asked Swami Turiyananda, 'What is the Nad-dhvani?' to which the Swami had countered, 'Do you hear the Nad-dhvani?' Gurudas Maharaj replied, 'No'. After some time had passed, Swami Turiyananda again asked Gurudas Maharaj, 'Do you hear the sound now?' This time Gurudas Maharaj did not reply. On another occasion Gurudas Maharaj mentioned that all people could hear the Nad-dhvani, but because their minds were not tuned to it they were unable to hear it. When his attendant asked him whether he could hear it, Gurudas Maharaj again remained silent. Swami Saradananda had told Gurudas Maharaj that as there are physical laws for the physical world so there are subtle laws for the subtle world. So what would be considered a miracle in the physical world may be reasonable in the other plane, when one's mind is there.

Swami Turiyananda attained mahasamadhi on July 21, 1922. Describing an incident that occurred one day before the mahasamadhi, Swami Dhruveswarananda wrote to Gurudas Maharaj, who was then in America, 'In the evening when his dressing

was finished, he was talking in English and we heard him uttering your name. Gurudas! Gurudas! and some other names. He said something inaudibly but we could not catch it. Probably Swami blessed you in his last hours.'

Years later, Swami Prabhavananda often recalled, 'When Swami Turiyananda was going to Shanti Ashrama, he told Sister Lalita, "If I have one man realizing God, I will be satisfied." When Sister Lalita asked, "Do you have such a man?" Turiyanandaji

replied "Yes, one." Meaning Gurudas', Swami Prabhavananda always added.

Of the several books connected with Swami Atulananda, *With the Swamis in America and India* and *Atman Alone Abides* are important works. He lived in Rishikesh for many years and later in Barlowganj near Mussoorie immersed in Vedantic contemplation. He gave up his body on 9 August 1966 aged ninety six. Admired by his fellow monks, he was a guide and inspiration for many westerners who later became members of the Ramakrishna Order. ✽



As I Saw Vivekananda

SWAMI ATULANANDA

Reproduced from December 1967-68 issue of *The Vedanta Kesari*.

My first meeting with Swami Vivekananda took place in 1899 when he came to America on his second visit. He had come from India, via England. The Vedanta Society of New York had arranged a welcome meeting soon after his arrival. There were just a few guests at the function, his old friends and members of the Vedanta Society. As I entered the room I saw Swamiji seated on the floor, Indian fashion. He was talking and joking with old friends he had known on his first visit. When I was introduced to him, I noticed his classical features, especially his expressive eyes. Later in the evening when he was moving among the guests I got my first real impression of him. I noticed his majestic bearing and grace of movement, and I felt that I was in the presence of a great personality, a man of strength and will-power. I thought, 'Here is a man who knows what he is about.'

Some of the guests made short speeches and then Swamiji spoke. He said that he was

happy to be back in a land of the free, to be with us, that he had come to learn as well as to teach, that he would be always at our service to help us in our spiritual life, that religion meant realization and that we must experience it. God has to be perceived, he told us. In Him there is no diversity and one who perceives many goes from death to death. When the desires of the heart are cut asunder then the mortal becomes immortal, then one becomes Brahman. Religion is not mere dogma or belief or much learning. One has to imbibe the gist of the scriptures. And then chanting Siva, Siva, he ended his talk, and the meeting dispersed.

After a few days of rest Swami began to hold classes on Vedanta. I had been so much impressed by him even at the first meeting that I became a regular attendant of these classes. We were only a small group of 20 or 30, and everything was informal. The Swami would open the class with a chant in Sanskrit, and give a short talk on Vedanta, and then would invite questions.

In one of these classes Swamiji spoke of the divinity of man. He said that behind the body and mind stands the Atman, ever free, our real self. It is not merely that God dwells in our heart, we are God. He told us the story of Swetaketu. Someone asked: 'Swamiji, we all know that we are sinners, weak and frail human beings, how can you reconcile this with your assertion that we are God?' Swamiji said in reply, 'Sin is ignorance, bring in the light of truth, and sin and ignorance will fly away.'

Then someone asked 'Why don't we see God?' and he replied, 'Because you talk in vain. If your thoughts are fixed on Atman as they now are on the things of this world, then you will be free from bondage, then you will know Brahman. Don't dwell on the weaker side of your nature, but assert the Truth — speak, think, live Truth, then you will be holy, pure and strong. Your scripture says: Know ye not that ye are gods? We now walk in the midst of a dream, half asleep, half awake, passing our lives in a haze. This is the universe, this is Maya. Wake up, tear the veil of bondage, be free. Freedom, mukti, is your goal.'

Wrong ideas were sometimes expressed by those who attended the classes. But Swamiji with great patience tried to correct us. One evening when someone said: 'But, Swamiji, our missionaries tell us so,' he became indignant. 'Who are your missionaries?' he demanded. 'Steeped in ignorance they want to enlighten us. They don't understand their own religion, but come to criticize and ridicule ours. But, thank God, there are some exceptions. I have come not to take away your Bible, but to give you a better understanding. I have not come to rob you of Jesus but to bring you closer to Jesus, we too revere and worship Jesus. Vedanta has no axe to grind. It gives freedom to everyone to follow his own chosen path.'

Swami Vivekananda knew human nature quite well, he could look deep into the human mind. He could by a glance know one's innermost thoughts. What was weak he would brush aside. And he would bring out what was the best in us. Weaknesses, he would say, are common to all. Virtues are individual. He held that a pure character was the only solid foundation on which religion could stand and be lasting. Be a *man* first, he used to tell us, and then become a God.

Swami Vivekananda was often the guest of very distinguished families, of people of high culture and standing in society, and then he came in contact with the best American brains. Scientists, philosophers, psychologists and authors came and exchanged ideas with him.

He was astonishingly well-informed on a great variety of subjects. He could meet all men on their own ground. Men of distinction were fascinated by his brilliant intellect and far-reaching knowledge. A scientist told him 'I come to your lectures because they fit in with our latest discoveries.' A psychologist said, 'Swamiji, we are just beginning to explore the mind. Your Raja-yoga is a revelation to us.'

All his life the Swami was guided by a great power. That power was his divine master, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. That power had brought him to earth from a higher plane, had moulded his character, had taught him and had given him God-vision. He knew that he was an instrument used by his Master; that it was his Master's will and strength and wisdom that acted through him. He said: 'If there is anything I have done that is helpful to the world, it is all His. If I have stumbled, made mistakes, it is all mine.' The Swami has been called an orator by divine right. He was also a world-teacher by divine right. Well may India be proud to have produced such a man. ✽

Worshipping the Omnipresent

SWAMI SATYAPRIYANANDA

It is generally held against Hinduism that it is idolatry and it advocates polytheism. Vedanta aptly addresses these two charges. Indeed, Vedanta interpreted in the light of the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda can resolve many intricate problems that we face today.

The Science of Vedanta

The fundamental ideas in Vedanta readily appeal to scientific minds.¹ Some of these ideas are:

1. Principle of Generalisation: The first principle of reasoning is that the particular is explained by the general, the general by the more general, until we come to the universal.... From humanity we generalise to living beings, next to life, and at last to existence.

2. Principle of Evolution: That the explanation of a thing comes from within itself is completely satisfied by Vedanta. The Brahman has nothing outside of Himself. All this indeed is He: He is *in* the universe: He *is* the universe Himself. ... 'The difference between man and man, between angels and man, between man and animals, between animals and plants, between plants and stones is not in kind, but only in the degree of manifestation.' That is the principle of evolution or greater manifestation.

3. Principle that Evolution is Cyclic: Evolution is not linear but cyclic, for, that

which evolves must have been involved earlier. The tree gets involved in the form of the seed; in the seed there is everything that is required to evolve itself into a full-grown tree. And this process continues.

Two other important Vedantic ideas are:

1. Solidarity of matter, of thought, and of spirit: Supposing we are materialists, we shall have to conclude that the whole universe is simply an ocean of matter, of which you and I are like little whirlpools, in a continuous state of flux. So also with thought. It is an ocean of thought, in which your mind and my mind are like whirlpools. 'That is why my thoughts are entering into yours, and yours into mine.' That again is why some are capable of reading the minds of others. And as spirit we are essentially one.

2. Why do we perceive matter, mind and spirit when all that exists is the spirit? Existence being the highest generalisation, and all matter being one, all minds being one, and all spirit being one, how do we perceive matter, mind and spirit as three things in that universal existence? Universal existence certainly is not matter, for, matter is that universal existence perceived by the five senses; that universal existence as perceived through the intellect is mind; and when the spirit sees, the universal existence is seen as spirit. Consciousness is not matter, but whatever is real in matter is Consciousness. Upon It the senses are painting images

¹ The author is a senior sannyasi of the Ramakrishna Order and lives in Belur Math.

and objects. Similarly, Consciousness as perceived through the intellect is mind; and it is spirit when seen by the spirit. The human mind, experiences the joy of sense pleasures (vishayananda); to meet its own specific needs, it sees this Consciousness as various forms of Gods and Goddesses and enjoys the joy of devotion (bhajanananda). And so, there is really no polytheism in Hinduism; it is the one Reality appearing in diverse ways. There are, in addition, special manifestations of this Consciousness from age to age as Incarnations of God. Furthermore, one experiences the bliss of Brahman (brahmananda) in samadhi.

Pointers to Brahman

Referring to his being an incarnation of God, Sri Ramakrishna asked his disciple Mahendranath Gupta, now well-known as 'M', whether the manifestation was fractional or complete. 'M' confessed that he did not comprehend 'fractional' and 'complete' manifestation of God, but understood the analogy of a 'round hole in the wall'. 'M' continued, 'there is a round hole in the wall. Through it one is able to see part of the meadow on the other side of the wall. Likewise, through *you* one sees part of the Infinite God.'² Thus, an incarnation of God or the personal God which is the highest reading of the Impersonal by the human mind, enables one to gain the experience of Brahman or Consciousness. After the demise of an Incarnation, he continues to live in his subtle body which devotees continue to see if they pray and call on him with great yearning. Gods and Goddesses and their images too are pointers to Brahman. What is more, everything in this universe, being pervaded by Consciousness, can be meditated upon as Brahman.

'Image of Consciousness'

One day the priest of the Radhakanta temple accidentally dropped the image of Krishna, breaking one of its legs. The pundits advised the Rani to install a new image, since the worship of an image with a broken limb was against scriptural injunctions. But the Rani asked Sri Ramakrishna for his opinion. He said: 'This solution is ridiculous. If a son-in-law of the Rani broke his leg, would she discard him and put another in his place? Wouldn't she rather arrange for his treatment? Why should she not do the same thing in this case too? Let the image be repaired and worshipped as before.'³ One notices in this solution that God is to be accepted as one of the members of the family and not merely as an image. A question arises here whether the fracture in the leg of the image implies a fracture in the leg of the deity represented by the image. The explanation for this is that the deity is Consciousness and *akhanda*, without parts, and hence cannot be broken. As Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Can the One, who is an indivisible Whole, be broken?'⁴ The all-pervading Consciousness, seen through the senses as the material image, is worshipped and not the material image. All the articles used in the worship are also that Consciousness. The mending of the image is essential because it pains a devotee to see a defective image of his chosen deity.

Again, 'M' asked Sri Ramakrishna: 'Sir, suppose one believes in God with form. Certainly He is not the clay image!' Sri Ramakrishna interrupted him saying: 'But why clay? It is an image of Spirit.'⁵

Swami Vivekananda too elucidated this point to the Maharaja of Alwar, who said that he had no faith in 'idol' worship. Asking the Dewan to bring down the picture of the Maharaja hanging on the wall, Swamiji asked the Dewan to spit on it. He pointed out that the

picture is but a piece of paper and the Maharaja is not bodily present in the picture. Yet the courtiers refused to dishonour it for they saw in the photo the likeness of the Maharaja. So is it with the devotees who worship stone, wooden, clay and metal images of Gods and Goddesses. An image brings to their minds their chosen deity or some special form and attributes of the Divinity, which helps them to concentrate their mind. They do not worship the material image but the supreme spirit which is in the image. And God appears to all according to their understanding and their representation of Him.⁶

Living Gods and Goddesses in Images

After the temple of Dakshineswar was built and the image made, there was delay in fixing an auspicious day for the installation. The image, kept packed in a box lest it should be damaged, suddenly perspired and the Rani got the command in a dream, 'How long will you keep me confined this way? I feel suffocated; install Me as soon as possible.'⁷

In the beginning, on some occasions at the time of worship and meditation, Sri Ramakrishna used to see a hand of the Divine Mother or a foot, bright and delicate, or Her sweet, affectionate and smiling face, supremely beautiful. Later he saw, even at times other than those of worship and meditation, the full figure of the effulgent Mother, smiling and speaking, guiding and accompanying him and saying, 'Do this, don't do that.' Formerly when he offered cooked food etc., to the Mother, he used to see an extraordinary ray of light coming out from Her eyes and touching the offered articles, taking their essential parts, and withdrawing itself again. Now, he saw that even before the offering was made, the same Mother in Her very person, sat down to take the offerings, illumining the temple with the effulgence of Her holy presence. ... Previously,

at the time of worship and meditation, he saw a wonderful living Presence in the stone image before him. Now he did not see that image at all when he entered the temple; but saw instead, the living Mother Herself standing there. The Master said, 'I put the palm of my hand near Her nostrils and felt that Mother was actually breathing. I observed very closely, but I could never see the shadow of the Mother's divine person. I heard from my room the jingling sounds of the Mother's anklets, as she went upstairs like a merry little girl. I came out to verify and found that She, with Her hair dishevelled, was actually standing on the verandah of the first floor of the temple and was now viewing Calcutta, and next the Ganges.'⁸ This is what an 'image of Consciousness', a living image, means!

One early morning at three o'clock, Gopala's Mother, a woman devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, was about to finish her daily devotions, when she was startled to find Sri Ramakrishna sitting on her left, with his right hand clenched, like the hand of the image of Gopala. She caught hold of the hand, whereupon the figure vanished and in its place appeared the real Gopala. Gopala begged her for butter. She pleaded her poverty and gave Him some dry coconut candies. Gopala sat on her lap, snatched away her rosary, jumped on her shoulders, and moved all about the room. At day break she hastened to Dakshineswar. Gopala accompanied her, resting His head on her shoulder. She clearly saw His tiny ruddy feet hanging over her breast. On entering Sri Ramakrishna's room, she found that Sri Ramakrishna had fallen into samadhi. Like a child, he sat on her lap, and she began to feed him with butter, cream, and other delicacies. The mind of Gopala's Mother was steeped in bliss. She saw Gopala frequently entering the Master's body and again coming out of

it. When she returned to her hut, still in a dazed condition, Gopala accompanied her. She spent about two months in uninterrupted communion with God, the Baby Gopala never leaving her for a moment. Sri Ramakrishna said that such vision of God was a rare thing for ordinary mortals.⁹

Discussing with another disciple these spiritual visions of Gopala's Mother, Swami Prabhavananda opined that these visions of Gopala's Mother belonged to the transcendental plane and that she had not actually seen Sri Krishna. How could one see God in the external world with physical eyes? Swami Brahmananda then said, 'Show me the line of demarcation where matter ends and spirit begins.'¹⁰ In other words when the eye of the spirit opens one sees Brahman everywhere.

Worship in Images

Sri Ramakrishna told two lady devotees as follows: 'Worship Siva. In order to perform the worship of God you will be preoccupied for a long time with such religious duties as plucking flowers, making sandal-paste, polishing the utensils of worship, and arranging offerings. As you perform these duties your mind will naturally be directed to God. You will get rid of meanness, anger, jealousy, and so forth. When you two sisters talk to each other, always talk about spiritual matters. The thing is somehow to unite the mind with God. Your thought of Him

should be without any interruption.

If you worship with love even a brick or stone as God, then through His grace you can see Him. ...

Once the mind has become mature, one doesn't have to continue formal worship for long. The mind then always remains united with God; meditation and contemplation become a constant habit of mind.'¹¹

Sri Ramakrishna advised a devotee to meditate upon her nephew as baby Gopala and she had exalted spiritual experiences thereby. To another who kept goats, his advise was to see God in the goat. The Holy Mother also pointed out that even a stick used to tether cows to the ground for grazing can be meditated upon as Brahman. Thus bearing in mind that the all-pervading Consciousness is being worshipped, any object can be used as a symbol.

Worship of God in Human Form

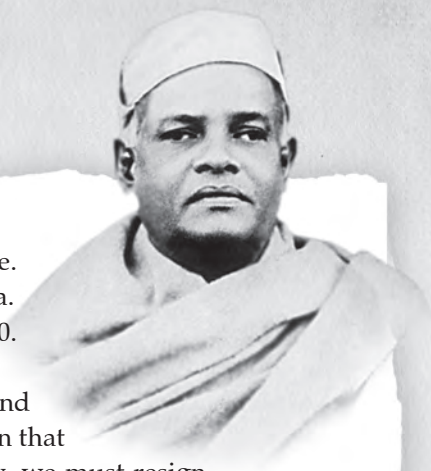
This gives rise to the leading question, 'If God can be worshipped in images, emblems, objects and even pets, why not in humanity?' Yes indeed God can be worshipped in human beings as well. This is the message that Swami Vivekananda preached as 'Shiva Jnane Jiva Seva' a mantra, a new spiritual practice for the awakening of our innate divinity. *

..*.*.*

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Unpublished Letters of Swami Saradananda¹



1, Mukherji Lane.
BaghBazar. Calcutta. India.
26.6.20.

My dear dear Sister Christine,²

I cannot tell you how much glad we are to receive your kind and comforting letter of April 26. It is not at all cheering though to learn that we might not have you among us for months yet. But as you say, we must resign ourselves to the 'Great Power' which rules our destinies. Our earnest prayer however will be always that you might be restored to us as soon as possible, to be at the helm of the Work, which originated in the mind of our beloved Swamiji and saw the light in and through you at the cost of twelve years of intense self-sacrifice. So please come to us as soon as you are permitted to do so, and remember always that we are ever ready to receive 'the exile' in our open arms. You will find many changes indeed, when you come, and miss many of your old friends and acquaintances, who have entered peace; but never will you find those who have been left yet in the field, wanting in devotion to you. You have heard of the passing away of the Swamis Premananda & Prajnananda—the new additions to the list have been the Swami Adbhutananda & the young Mr. Bose (Ramkrishna Bose) of the no. 57 premises, in the last two months.

Again, the Holy Mother has been confined to her bed with a malignant type of malarial fever, and there seems to be very little chance for her recovery. She is having the fever for the last six months and has come to Calcutta for treatment on Feb. 27 last. You can well imagine how very sad we feel at present and withal how much busy it has kept us. The dear girls of your school Sudhira and the rest are working day and night to nurse her and trying their best to bring what little relief they can to her.

I thank you for your kindly permitting us to feel free about making arrangements for the school as we think best under the circumstances. And you can rest assured, we shall always pause to think what you would like to do, when we will be compelled to bring about any change or changes in the plan of the work and its location, and shall act accordingly.

Gonen wishes to be remembered kindly to you & is sending by mail a booklet of the Sister Nivedita which he has recently published and which he has found in her papers.

With our united loving regards and cordial wishes to you always,

Yours affectly
Saradananda.



Calcutta
5.8.21.

My dear Mokshadananda,

Your letter reached me in due time. I was busy with various things, so the delay in acknowledging yours. It is impossible to write you about the Shat-chakra Dhyana in the compass of a letter. You better ask Nirode Maharaj about it.

You know perhaps Hari Maharaj is very very ill at Benaras. Swami Sharvananda (Charu) came to Calcutta en route for Madras & Bangalore. He has started yesterday. I hope your headache has cured by this time. With my blessings to you,

Yours affly
Saradananda.

P.S.

Kindly give my blessings to all the Swamis & Brahmacharins connected with us of the Belur Math.

S.

[On the card:]

Swami Mokshadananda
C/o Swami Kalyanananda
Ramakrishna Mission Shevasram
Kankhal
(near Hardwar)
Dt. Shahrampur.



UDBODHAN OFFICE,
1, Mukherjee Lane, Baghbazar,
CALCUTTA.
Feb. 16th 1922.

My dear Tantine Jojo³ –

Your kind letter of Jan 10 has just come. And I hasten to let you know that it is such an unexpected delightful surprise! Welcome dear friend— Thou ever radiant messenger of Light— welcome to your Eastern home! The guest house at Belur Math—Mayavati—everything will be arranged—come.

Everything is getting on as usual here, and everybody is joining me in sending kind and warm regards to you always,

Yours affectly
Saradananda.

References

1. A direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna 2 & 3. Disciples of Swami Vivekananda

Courtesy: Ramakrishna Museum, Belur Math



THE ORDER ON THE MARCH

News & Notes from Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission

New Math and Mission Centre

A new branch centre of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission has been started at **Chandpur** in Bangladesh.

New Math Sub-Centre

A sub-centre of Ramakrishna Math, directly under the supervision of the Headquarters, has been started at the house of Sri Mahendranath Gupta (also known as 'M'), the chronicler of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. The General Secretary inaugurated the sub-centre on 4 January, the sacred birthday of Swami Saradanandaji Maharaj.

National Youth Day Celebrations

94 centres and the Headquarters (along with Saradapitha) celebrated the National Youth Day (12 January) with great enthusiasm by holding various programmes such as processions, youths' conventions, speeches and cultural competitions. Cultural competitions held by the following centres deserve special mention: Chennai Math: 43,000 students from 410 schools & 30 colleges, Madurai: 16,412 students from 178 educational institutions, Muzaffarpur: 5000 students from 40 schools & colleges, Nagpur: 5394 students from 60 schools located in 31 villages & Rajkot: 8147 students from 160 schools & colleges.

Celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Abhedanandaji Maharaj

Swamiji's Ancestral House conducted a special lecture on 17 January which was attended by about 300 people. **Vadodara** centre held a public meeting in the Ashrama premises on 29 January in which Swami Prabhanandaji delivered a speech of benediction. About 150 people attended the meeting.

Celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Saradanandaji Maharaj

Lucknow centre conducted a public meeting, a spiritual retreat and a programme for youths on 4 and 8 January which were attended by about 300 devotees and 400 youths.

Celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sister Nivedita

Baranagar Mission Ashrama installed a statue of Sister Nivedita in its campus which was unveiled by the General Secretary on 28 January. Besides, an exhibition on Sister Nivedita was set up on this occasion. **Barisha** Math conducted a devotees' convention on 29 January which was attended by about 1200 devotees. **Cossipore** Math held a youths' convention on 4 January in which about 1500 people took part. **Delhi** centre conducted a symposium on the topic 'Nationality: Basis of interfaith harmony' on 25 January in which 22 speakers from different religions took part. **Gourhati** centre held a youths' convention and a devotees' convention on 21 and 22 January which were attended by 623 youths and 425 devotees. On the initiative of **Kankurgachhi** Math, a procession and a youths' convention were held at Khanakul in Hooghly district on 9 and 10 January. About 3000 people participated in the procession and

500 students in the convention. **Karimganj** centre held a devotees' convention on 18 December in which 305 devotees took part. **Lucknow** centre conducted a meeting and a seminar on 22 and 23 December. The two-day programme was inaugurated by Sri Ram Naik, Governor of Uttar Pradesh, and attended by about 700 people. **Mangaluru** centre held a women empowerment programme on 13 January which was attended by about 700 girls. **Medinipur** centre conducted a youths' convention on 19 January which was attended by about 400 students. **Ponnampet** Ashrama held a youths' convention and a spiritual retreat on 28 and 29 January in which about 400 youths and 40 devotees participated. **Puri Mission** Ashrama held written quiz competitions on Sister Nivedita in 10 schools in Odisha in January in which altogether 659 students took part. Besides, the Ashrama conducted meetings at two places in Nabarangpur district in Odisha on 21 and 22 January which were attended by about 1000 persons in all, mostly youths. The centre also conducted a meeting in the Ashrama premises on 28 January which was attended by about 150 people. **Swamiji's Ancestral House** conducted two lectures at the centre on 31 December and 20 January which were attended altogether by 650 people. On the centre's initiative, a discourse was held at another place in Kolkata on 1 January which was attended by about 300 people. **Vadodara** centre held a public meeting at Kim (Surat district) on 29 January in which Swami Prabhanandaji delivered benedictory address. About 1000 people attended the programme. **Varanasi Home of Service** conducted a classical music programme on 22 January which was attended by nearly 200 people.

News of Branch Centres (in India)

In association with the Government of Jharkhand, **Ranchi Morabadi** Ashrama conducted Yuva Jagaran Vivek Rath Parikrama. The Rath visited all the 24 districts of Jharkhand.

Seva Pratishthan conducted a round-the-clock medical camp during Makar Sankranti Mela at Sagar Island in South 24-Parganas district. In all, 7389 patients were treated. Besides, 150 blankets and about 5000 copies of religious books were distributed among the pilgrims. The centre also held a similar camp during Jayadev Mela at Kenduli in Birbhum district in which 619 patients were treated.

On the occasion of Gangasagar Mela, **Manasadwip** centre held a camp at the Mela area. In all, 1438 pilgrims were provided with free board and lodging at the camp and the Ashrama. Besides, free meals were served to about 400 non-resident pilgrims daily. Discourses and devotional singing were also arranged in the camp.

Blind Boys' Academy of **Narendrapur** Ashrama celebrated its diamond jubilee. Swami Prabhanandaji inaugurated the event which included an exhibition put up by the Academy's students, a seminar on 'Emergence of library services for the visually impaired', cultural shows and competitions.

Narainpur centre held a *kisan mela* (farmers' fair) which was visited by about 7000 farmers.

Ranchi Morabadi Ashrama held a central *kisan mela*. Smt Draupadi Murmu, Governor of Jharkhand, and Sri Sudarshan Bhagat, Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Family Welfare, among others, attended the concluding session of the event. The fair was visited by about 12,000 farmers.

Sri Ram Nath Kovind, Governor of Bihar, visited **Patna** Ashrama on 24 January.

On the sacred birthday of Swami Brahmanandaji Maharaj, Swami Vagishanandaji inaugurated the newly built *Faculty & Scholars' House* at **Vivekananda University**, Belur, and a meditation gallery at the School of Indian Heritage on the same campus.

The following centres conducted free eye camps:

16 centres conducted free eye camps in which patients were tested/given spectacles/operated: Bankura centre treated 418, operated 84 patients; Chennai Math treated 105, operated 15; Delhi treated 159,

operated 36; Jamshedpur treated 107, operated 45; Kamarpukur treated 420, operated 64; Khetri 135, operated 47; Lucknow treated 2986, operated 512; Madurai treated 191, operated 39; Porbandar treated 51, operated 12; Rajamahendravaram treated 213, operated 27, Rajkot treated 172, operated 83 patients; Salem treated 393, operated 90; Sargachhi treated 6778, operated 330; Seva Pratishtan treated 120, operated 11; Silchar treated 361, operated 58 and Vadodara treated 45, operated 14. Ranchi Morabadi treated 1268 children and 43 adults; operated 4.

Values Education and Youth Programmes

Delhi centre held five values education workshops which were attended by 405 principals and teachers. The workshops were held at Ghaziabad, Jaipur, Bhopal, Indore and Delhi. **Halasuru** Math conducted values education programmes at 50 schools in Bellary district. **Haripad** Math conducted meetings on values education at four schools in which 453 students participated. **Hyderabad** Math held a youth camp in which 321 youths participated. **Khetri** centre held seven values education workshops in four schools in which 470 students and 16 teachers took part. **Vadodara** centre conducted two values education which were attended altogether by about 250 academicians.

Swachhha Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Campaign)

Coimbatore Mission Vidyalyaya students cleaned a few public places including a temple, a hospital and a government office. **Kamarpukur** centre carried out three cleanliness drives in which several monks, employees and volunteers participated. **Mangaluru** centre conducted altogether 46 cleaning drives in and around Mangaluru. In all, 6500 volunteers actively participated in these drives. **Mysuru** Ashrama launched *Swachhha Mysuru Swachhha Jeevana* programme to bring public awareness about cleanliness and environmental protection. 230 volunteers and 80 students carried out cleanliness and awareness drive at 7 localities. **Varanasi Home of Service** carried out a cleanliness drive in which 45 people took part. A rally, attended by 300 people, was also taken out to create awareness about cleanliness.

News of Branch Centres (Outside India)

Homer Glen, USA, centre has started a city centre in Hyde Park, Chicago. **Dhaka** (Bangladesh) centre conducted a seminar on values education which was inaugurated by the Home Minister of Bangladesh, Mr Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, and attended by more than 600 persons, mainly youths.

Relief Work

The following centres distributed various winter garments, mentioned against their names, to needy people:

(a) **Bagda**: 724 sweaters. (b) **Chandigarh**: 758 sweaters, 770 jackets and 500 mufflers. (c) **Chapra**: 210 jackets and 220 sweaters. (d) **Cooch Behar**: 220 sweaters and 129 sweatshirts. (e) **Darjeeling**: 2480 sweaters and 10,143 jackets. (f) **Deoghar**: 1751 sweaters. (g) **Ghatshila**: 1034 sweaters, 675 sweatshirts and 1018 mufflers. (h) **Jamshedpur**: 399 sweaters and 200 mufflers. (i) **Kailashahar**: 529 sweaters. (j) **Kamarpukur**: 40 shawls. (k) **Kankurgachhi**: 356 sweaters. (l) **Limbdi**: 247 sweaters. (m) **Lucknow**: 3111 sweaters. (n) **Mysuru**: 422 sweaters and 91 sweatshirts. (o) **Nagpur**: 1070 sweaters and 573 jackets. (p) **Narottam Nagar**: 395 sweaters and 240 sweatshirts. (q) **Patna**: 599 sweaters and 614 sweatshirts. (r) **Purulia**: 975 sweaters. (s) **Rajkot**: 3844 sweaters, 1137 jackets and 132 sweatshirts. (t) **Ramharipur**: 201 jackets, 856 sweaters and 214 sweatshirts. (u) **Ranchi Morabadi**: 3021 sweaters and 2840 jackets. (v) **Ranchi Sanatorium**: 885 sweaters. (w) **Sargachhi**: 631 sweatshirts and 450 mufflers. (x) **Shyamla**

Tal: 1500 sweaters, 850 sweatshirts, 1698 jackets and 849 coats. (y) **Vrindaban:** 1600 sweaters.

1. Flood Relief: Bihar: Chapra centre distributed 5811 *saris*, 5227 *dhotis*, 1000 blankets and 960 jackets among 7771 flood-affected families in 37 villages of Chapra district.

2. Cyclone Relief: Tamil Nadu: In the wake of the devastating Cyclone Vardha, **Chennai Students' Home** distributed 300 kg rice, 20 kg *dal* (lentils), 20 kg red beans, 20 kg tamarind, 12 kg assorted spices, 20 kg salt, 20 kg edible oil, 40 kg sugar, 20 mats, 200 kg various vegetables and 20 tarpaulin sheets among 20 poor tribal families in Kallur village in Thiruvallur district.

3. Fire Relief: Arunachal Pradesh: Following an accidental fire in the nearby Ngomdir village, **Aalo** centre provided medical assistance to 57 affected patients.

4. Distress Relief: The following centres distributed various items, as shown against their names, to needy people: (a) **Aurangabad:** 2152 shirts and 2152 pants. (b) **Bagda:** 2238 shirts, 316 tops and 3760 pants. (c) **Baghbazar:** 1175 shirts and 3325 pants. (d) **Burdwan** (Headquarters): 1006 shirts, 1005 pants and 45 plates. (e) **Chandigarh:** 620 tops and 2000 pairs of socks. (f) **Chapra:** 207 shirts, 414 pants, 238 T-shirts and 435 tops. (g) **Cooch Behar:** 410 shirts, 475 tops and 510 pants. (h) **Darjeeling:** 29,685 shirts, 22,759 pants, 9935 tops, 409 *saris* and 4339 other ladies garments. (i) **Deoghar:** 3329 shirts and 1827 pants. (j) **Ghatshila:** 1626 shirts, 1110 tops, 1201 T-shirts, 2515 pants and 2000 pairs of socks. (k) **Jamshedpur:** 515 shirts, 834 tops, 272 pants and 400 pairs of socks. (l) **Kankurgachhi:** 446 shirts, 1328 tops and 339 pants. (m) **Koyilandy:** 2255 shirts and 1510 pants. (n) **Lucknow:** 6041 shirts and 3133 pants. (o) **Mangaluru:** 2041 shirts, 1940 tops and 2228 pants. (p) **Mysuru:** 2073 shirts, 1457 T-shirts, 340 leggings, 245 tunics, 2314 pants, 734 tops, 30 *saris* and other ladies garments. (q) **Nagpur:** 7883 shirts, 216 T-shirts and 4903 pants. (r) **Naora:** 1800 exercise books, 1200 pens, 600 pencils, 600 erasers and 600 sharpeners. (s) **Narottam Nagar:** 175 shirts, 945 pants, 1047 T-shirts, 822 tops and 1489 pairs of socks. (t) **Patna:** 1250 shirts, 1610 tops and 1840 pants. (u) **Pune:** 1920 shirts and 2047 pants. (v) **Puri Math:** 1553 shirts and 1517 pants. (w) **Purulia:** 3981 T-shirts, 432 tops and 4260 pants. (x) **Rajamahendravaram:** 60 *saris* and 26 *dhotis*. (y) **Rajkot:** 7707 ladies garments and 8875 gents garments. (z) **Ramharipur:** 850 shirts, 790 tops and 741 pants. (aa) **Ranchi Morabadi:** 5000 tops and 2500 pants. (ab) **Ranchi Sanatorium:** 3380 shirts and 1980 tops. (ac) **Sargachhi:** 4176 shirts, 2324 pants and 1000 pairs of socks. (ad) **Shyamla Tal:** 846 shirts, 134 T-shirts, 976 tops and 3001 pants. (ae) **Vadodara:** 200 notebooks and 50 sketch pen sets. (af) **Visakhapatnam:** 4600 shirts, 2490 T-shirts, 2576 tops and 7365 pants. (ag) **Vrindaban:** 1600 *dhotis*, 1600 pairs of socks, 1600 phials of hair oil and 3200 bars of soap.

5. Drought Rehabilitation: (i) **Telangana: Hyderabad** centre installed a reverse osmosis plant at Antappaguda village in Ranga Reddy district to provide safe drinking water to the villagers. (ii) **West Bengal: Saradapitha** centre installed two arsenic and iron removal plants in Panderpara and Gangnapur villages in Nadia district.

6. Flood Rehabilitation: Tamil Nadu: Continuing its rehabilitation work in the flood-ravaged Kallur village in Thiruvallur district, **Chennai Students' Home** distributed 12 fishing boats, 48 fishing-nets and 17 tarpaulin sheets among 17 poor tribal families. *

Hyderabad



Vrindaban



Book Reviews

FOR REVIEW IN THE VEDANTA KESARI,
PUBLISHERS NEED TO SEND US TWO COPIES OF THEIR LATEST PUBLICATION.



**ASPECTS OF INDIAN CULTURE
VIEWED THROUGH RAMAKRISHNA-
VIVEKANANDA IDEOLOGY**
by **Swami Mumukshananda.**

Published by Ramakrishna Mission
Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Kolkata
700 029. E-mail: rmicsale@gmail.com;

2016, paperback, pp. 91, Rs.40

Indian culture has been a subject of universal admiration for its syncretic nature, its ability to absorb and accept the apparently irreconcilable. Nowhere is this more evident than in matters of religion and faith. This slim volume by Swami Mumukshananda, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order who passed away recently, seeks to show the ways in which this has been achieved through the ideology of Sri Ramakrishna and, through him, by Swami Vivekananda.

India's spirituality is its biggest strength and her contribution to the riches of the world's collective wealth. Other countries have their rationality, their scientific temper, their natural tendency for invention and discovery; to this group India shows that the two – science and spirituality – are not mutually exclusive. In the first chapter, Swami Mumukshananda gives an account of Sri Ramakrishna's role in making the ancient wisdom of India universally available through his teachings. He emphasizes the central theme of all the schools of Vedanta – that human beings are in essence the 'blissful, immortal Atman, the source of all divine qualities,' (page 16, Aspects of Indian Culture). This is further explained in the second chapter where the writer introduces the concept of Practical Vedanta, by reiterating Swamiji's primary teaching of realising the divinity present not only in oneself but in every other living being. One of the essential duties of a human being is to respect and revere this. Secondly, realising and awakening our divinity, which is lying dormant in most of us, enhances the sense of what it is to be human.

The fourth and fifth chapters are analysis of the faculty of tolerance that is the cornerstone of Hinduism. Assimilation is an accepted Indian norm and it comes naturally to Indians. Swami Vivekananda emphasised that this was the primary mover in Indian culture (spirituality and faith) and the natural tendency in most Indians, whatever their religion, is for both formal and informal worship. Throughout her history, India has been home to every religion, thereby enriching her culture.

The last essay in the book is very useful and timely, as well as thought-provoking. It is on the role of value education in our educational system. Making a strong case for a multi-pronged approach for imbibing values when young, Swami Mumukshananda recommends that teachers and parents should join forces and actually live the higher life in their daily living, if we want to raise a generation of young people with inner balance and poise. In other words, paying lip service to value education is mere tokenism; if we want to pass down our values, they have got to be demonstrated in real life.

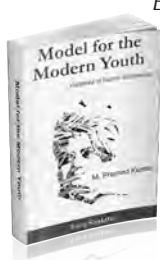
The book is packed with intricate ideas, especially in the first two chapters, and requires careful study. Every chapter has to be read with care and understanding and can become a manual for teachers and parents bewildered by the conflicting nature of present-day value systems. Creating responsible citizens and a good society is no easy task: we need all the guidance we can get and this book provides it. The cover illustration is the key – the Pole Star in the middle remaining unchanged whatever the season.

PREMA RAGHUNATH, CHENNAI

**MODEL FOR THE MODERN YOUTH – VIBRATIONS
OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA**

by **M.Pramod Kumar.**

Published by Yuva Shakthi, No.3, Parthasarathy
Street, Vellala Teynampet, Chennai, 600 086,



E-mail: yuvashakthi.chennai@yahoo.
in. 2014, paperback, pp.56, (Price
not given)

This slim volume is a compilation of a set of articles and speeches of Shri Pramod Kumar of Amritha University, Coimbatore brought out on the occasion of 150th anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.

The book aims to give an overall picture of the development of youth and starts off by describing the Theory of Multiple Intelligences, Howard Gardner's famous offering to education, aiding teachers and parents to appreciate better the multi-faceted talents of young people.

The author goes on to speak about the problems besetting young people today – many of whom suffer from too many choices, an affliction known as option paralysis, and are unable to choose rightly. However, it is true that in our country some parents force their children into courses for which they have neither aptitude nor liking, a surefire recipe for misery and unhappiness.

To counter this, Shri Pramod Kumar seeks to guide young people towards spirituality as a panacea for their confusions and conflicts by showing ways to answer the question that has defied from time immemorial philosophers, saints, educationists, doctors alike – how to achieve lasting peace and contentment. The closest this ticklish question has ever come to for an answer is Swamiji's assertion – live for others, make truth your touchstone, and make no compromises with these two ideals. Though Swamiji called it a 'man-making' education, it is obvious that he meant women as well.

A useful primer and a quick read written in a simple, non-fussy style, this little book is a good addition to any student's reading list.

PREMA RAGHUNATH, CHENNAI



**SRI SANKARA'S BHASYAGRANTHAS:
A SYNTHESIS OF SCIENCE AND
SPIRITUALITY**

by **Dr. V. Vasanthakumari**

Published by Department of
Vedanta, Sree Sankaracharya
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Ernakulam, Kerala - 683 574; E-mail:

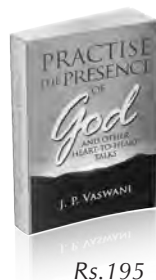
vasanthasudha@gmail.com; 2013, paperback,
Pp. 178 Price: Rs. 200.

The book under review establishes how Sankara's essentially intuitive comments in his Bhasyagranthas breathe scientific flavour and are in consonance with reason. A summary, given below, of the author's prefatory observations on the lay-out of the topics chapter-wise serves as a barometer of the value of the book. The eight chapters - Chapters One to Eight - deal with the following topics respectively: 1. Sankara's biography, 2. Enunciation of his philosophy based purely on his Bhasyagranthas, 3. Affirmation of his credentials for the title 'Vedabhasyakara', 4. The special features of his Bhasyagranthas such as the methodology adopted by him for writing his Bhasyas and his remarkable dexterity in making his Advaitic doctrines popular among the masses through his poetic skill and *nyayas* employed in his bhasyas, 5. Illustration of the materialistic thoughts and the scientific facts as found in his bhasyas, 6. Explanation of the process of creation i.e. Panchikaranam and its present-day relevance as a valid scientific theory, 7. An investigation into his credentials for being considered a 'synthesizer of science and spirituality', and 8. Recapitulation, in a nutshell, of the of the topics covered in the book.

There are two Appendices, the first one giving a list of Sankara's biographies and the second one furnishing a list of his prolific writings. The section on Selected Bibliography at the end is very useful.

The book is a well-researched one and bound to be a delicious intellectual feast for philosophy buffs, particularly to the scholar-fans of Sankara.

N.HARIHARAN, MADURAI



**PRACTISE THE PRESENCE OF GOD –
AND OTHER HEART-TO-HEART TALKS**
by **J.P. Vaswani**

Published by Sterling Publishers Pvt.
Ltd. Received from Gita Publishing
House, 10, Sadu Vaswani Path, Pune
- 411 001. Email: gph@sadhuvaswani.
org; 2015, paperback, pp.136,
Rs.195

Another very readable book from the prolific pen of J P Vaswani, this book of fifteen short chapters is full of practical wisdom.

The book begins with a narration of the ubiquitousness of God's presence in our lives and reminds us that, as a source of unflinching and immediate help, he is ever at hand. To bring him actively into our lives, however, we too have to do something. The first is to cultivate a healthy life style to create a body that can house the atman. Service is then held up as an ideal for all of us to aspire to, a basic requirement to spiritual growth that Swamiji stressed at every step: service that preserves the dignity of the receiver while being a spiritual enhancer by creating an opportunity for the doer to be of use.

The author touches upon the very human failing of worrying – generating anxiety and tension about things over which we have no control or which might never even happen. This is a wasteful habit of many of us that prevents us from living and savouring the matchless gift of life to the full.

Here is where the spiritual path is most needed, not as a means of escape but as a game-changer, by taking us on a path of enquiry. To facilitate this, a great mentor is required – the guru – who can lead us out of the darkness of ignorance into the light of self-awareness. There is a caveat to this: enquiry without guidance can degenerate into morbid self-examination, hence the value of a guru is untold.

Finally the author writes about women and their place in society. Though ever vilified as 'the weaker sex', Dada Vaswani points out that a woman is capable of enormous strength in her own right as a wife, mother, nurturer and co-worker, a chapter that ought to be read by all those who would relegate women to a dark room.

This book is full of interesting little anecdotes and stories which lighten the heaviness of counsel. The writing is, as always, accessible and advice sits lightly on the receiver, a very good thing when it comes to the young for whom the book is aimed.

PREMA RAGHUNATH, CHENNAI

YOGIC & VEDIC HERITAGE FESTIVALS OF BHARATA

Original in Kannada by **Sri Sri Rangapriya Swami**, translated into English by **Prof. K.S.Sridharan, Dr.Hungi Eswara** and **Viswanatha Sharma**

Published by *Bharata Samskrithi Prakashana*. Available at *Bharatha Darshana*, No.163,



Manjunatha Road, 2nd Block, Tyagaraja Nagar, Bangalore - 560 028; E-mail: bsplig@gmail.com; 2015, Hardbound, 736 + viii price: Rs.895.

This book is almost a mini encyclopedia of Indian culture. The author is well-known for his vast and deep knowledge in the ritualistic and cultural aspects of Hinduism. The book very well reflects this.

The book takes various Hindu festivals in chronological order during the year, starting from Ugadi ending with Holi. For each festival, the various puranic and historical backgrounds are given. The way to celebrate the festival, the austerities, rituals, food preparation and other activities are given in great detail. The benefit of each festival is also discussed in detail. For every point, various references from various scriptures are given. It is really a deluge of information.

Here are some of the festivals covered: Ugadi, Ramanavami, Hanumat Jayanti, Akshaya Tritiya, Narasimha Jayanti, Prathama Ekadasi, Nagara Pancami, Varamahalakshmi Vrata, Upakarma, Sri Krishna Jayanti, Gauri Puja, Ganesha Chaturthi, Sri Anantapadmanabha Vrata, Navaratri, Dipavali, Utthana Dvadasi, Makara Sankranti, Catur Masya, Krittika Dipotsava, Subbaraya Shashthi, Ratha Saptami, Maha Sivaratri and Holi.

There are quite a few digressions while discussing the festivals. These cover a variety of interesting and useful topics, like 'Why is Ganga holy?', 'The various time measurements in Indian culture', 'Historicity of Rama and Krishna', 'Was Hanuman a tribal person?', etc. These topics give a very comprehensive knowledge about Indian culture.

The book tends to show a negative attitude towards people and their modern behaviour which could have been avoided. Another problem is that there are several highly superstitious statements like, 'Hell is certain for those who do not take oil bath on Ugadi day.' These could have been avoided to make the book easily acceptable to more people, especially the modern youth.

The book has a good glossary. A good index with references to the topics in the book will be very helpful.

GOKULMUTHU N, BANGALORE

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This book discusses in brief the role India has played in shaping the global thought and culture, and also how the philosophy of the Upanishads has influenced Western thought.



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By Dr Satish Kapoor

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Swami Vivekananda The ultimate Paradox Manager

By Asim Chaudhuri

The life of every human being is seen to be filled with paradoxes; and when it comes to the great world-impacting personalities like Swami Vivekananda, it becomes all the more conspicuous. Paradoxes or contradictions can prove to be quite exhausting for most of us to handle; and when we fail to handle it properly, it becomes the source of negative feelings of guilt, anxiety, a sense of moral deprivation, loss of self-esteem, and the like. How Swamiji managed the paradoxes or dissonances in his own life forms the main subject-matter of this book. The author looks at the paradoxes of Swamiji's life through the lens of Leon Festinger's "theory of cognitive dissonance"; and the result is a stimulating work that brings out the co-existing "light-and-shade" facets of Swamiji's multi-dimensional personality.



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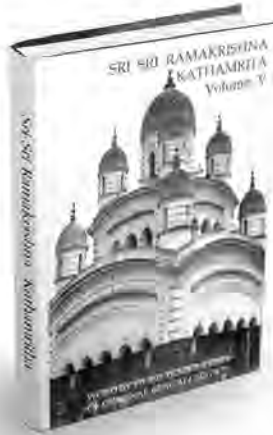


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RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA

(Headquarters : Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, (Near Kolkata)
 Dist. Howrah, West Bengal - 711 202)

Swami Vivekananda Marg (Beed Bypass),
 AURANGABAD - 431 010.

The Universal Temple of Bhagwan Shri Ramakrishna (Under Construction) An earnest Appeal for generous donations

Dear Sir / Madam,

Please accept our greetings and best wishes.

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Aurangabad located on Swami Vivekananda Marg (Beed Bypass) is a branch center affiliated to Headquarters, Belur Math (near Kolkata). This ashrama is conducting various service activities in the field of health, education, child welfare, as well as spreading spiritual message of eternal religion as propounded by Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

This ashrama has taken up a new project of erecting a temple of Shri Ramakrishna. The work was commenced in December 2009 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2017.

The temple will be a unique and imposing monumental structure of its kind in entire Marathwada region in general and Aurangabad city in particular. It will add a cultural and spiritual dimension to the historical city of Aurangabad. It will be a great attraction and a place for worship, prayer, meditation and inspiration for the local people. It is also expected that the good number of general public visiting Aurangabad city as tourists for visiting world heritage sites such as Ellora & Ajanta and pilgrims for visiting Ghrishneshwar Jyotirling, Shirdi, Paithan etc. will include visit to the temple in their itinerary. It is aimed for the benefit of one and all without distinction of caste, creed, and nationality.

The estimated cost of the entire project is Rs. 20 Crores. So far Rs. 15.00 Crores have been spent through public contribution. The balance amount of Rs. 05.00 Crores is needed to complete the construction of the Temple.

We earnestly appeal to you to donate generously for this noble cause. Your support will indeed go a long way in our endeavor to erect this magnificent architectural edifice in the memory of Shri Ramakrishna who was the unique harmonizer of all the religions of the world and who dedicated his life to bring peace and welfare of mankind.

We value your help and co-operation immensely.

Yours in the service of the Lord,

Vishnupadananda

(Swami Vishnupadananda)
 Secretary

Temple Dimensions	: Length: 156 ft. Breadth: 076 ft Height: 100 ft.
Temple Construction Area	: 18000 Sq.ft.
Garbhagriha	: 24ft. x 24ft.
Temple Hall for Prayer and Meditation	: 70ft. x 40ft. Seating Capacity - 450
Auditorium (Ground Floor)	: 80ft. x 57ft. Seating Capacity - 500
The entire Temple will be built in Chunar sandstone and interior in Ambaji and Makarana marble. Ceiling of the Temple Hall will be done in Teak Wood	
Estimated Cost : Rs. 20 Crores	



Model of the Proposed New Temple



We accept Online donations. You may please credit your donation directly on our Online State Bank of India, MIT Branch, Aurangabad, A/c No. 30697728250, (Branch Code : 10791, IFSC Code:- SBIN0010791)
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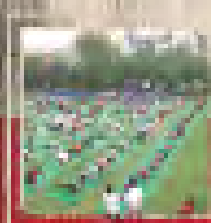
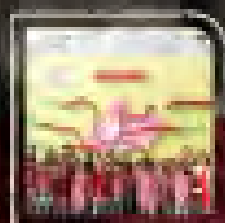


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Teach yourselves, teach everyone his/her real nature, call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come, when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.

—Swami Vivekananda

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