



New Shrine, Vedanta Centre of Sydney

REACH

Issue 85 | October 2026

W^E welcome you all to the Vedanta Movement in Australia, which is inspired by the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda. We invite your active participation as we together learn, assimilate, and share the Universal Message of Vedanta.

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Pearls of Wisdom

I do see God directly. What shall I reason about? I clearly see that He Himself has become everything; that He Himself has become the universe and all living beings. But without awakening one's own inner consciousness one cannot realize the All-pervading Consciousness.

The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, p.734

Our Master is the protector and redeemer of the lowly. He was born as man to redeem the lowly. We do not know anything other than the name of the Master. We know that he who was Rama and Krishna is Ramakrishna in this age. Our Master is the veritable embodiment of all ideals and of all divine manifestations.

For Seekers of God: Spiritual Talks of Mahapurush Swami Shivananda, Advaita Ashrama, pg. 61

When I think of myself as the body, I am only a body; it is meaningless to say I am something else. And when I think of myself as the soul, the body vanishes, and the perception of the body does not remain. None can get the perception of the Self without his perception of the body having vanished, none can get perception of the substance without his perception of the qualities having vanished.

The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Advaita Ashrama, Vol.2, p.346

News from Australian Centres

Period: 11 June, 2026 to 10 September, 2026

Adelaide

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Daily Activities

- The Centre was open for devotees from 7:30 am–12:30 pm and 4:00–8:00 pm. The evening Aaratrikam (Vesper service to Sri Ramakrishna) was performed from 7:00–7:30 pm followed by bhajans, devotional reading and a short meditation.

Regular Activities

- The centre observed Ekadasi with Ramanama Sankirtanam every lunar fortnight.
- Talks and discussion on the Upanishads (Wednesday 11:00 am), Durga Saptashati (Saturday 4:00 pm), Bhagavad Gita (Sunday 11:00 am) and Vivekachudamani (Sunday 5:30 pm) by Swami Manyananda were held every week.
- Bala Sangha, weekly spiritual classes for children, were held from 4:00–5:00 pm every Sunday. The classes are coordinated by Swami Manyananda and volunteers, and include mantra chanting, meditation, yoga, singing, reading from spiritual texts, value-based lessons and arts and crafts. The programme concludes with light refreshments.

- The reading of The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna by a devotee and discussion led by Swami Manyananda on emerging points was held on alternate Saturday evenings before Aaratrikam (Vesper service to Sri Ramakrishna).

Celebrations

- Guru Purnima is an important festive day - celebrated in all the Centres of Ramakrishna Math and Mission - when the devotees worship and remember their spiritual teacher - who according to Vedantic texts - is none other than God himself. Guru Purnima was celebrated on Wednesday, 29 July. The evening programme started with Aaratrikam (Vesper service to Sri Ramakrishna) and included special puja, bhajan, a talk on the occasion of Guru Purnima by Swami Manyananda, Aarti, pushpanjali, and distribution of prasad.
- A Satsangha - kirtan, chanting, discussion and Q&A was held on Saturday, 8 August. The programme started with a welcome/opening prayer, followed by sacred chanting and Kirtan, a short talk by Swami Manyananda, Q&A and meditation session, aarti, and concluded with community shared dinner.
- Sri Krishna Janmashtami - the blessed day of incarnation of Lord Krishna - was celebrated on Friday, 4 September. The evening programme included Aaratrikam (Vesper Service to Sri Ramakrishna), bhajans on Sri Krishna, reading on the birth of

Sri Krishna avatar, aarati of Lord Krishna, pushpanjali, and distribution of prasad.



Sri Krishna Janmashtami Celebration

Other Activities & News

- Swami Sarvapriyananda, a revered monk of the Ramakrishna Order and the Minister-in-charge of the Vedanta Society of New York, visited the Centre on 15 and 16 August.



A talk at the University of Adelaide

On Saturday, 15 August, he spoke on the persistent question “Who am I?” that lies at the heart of every spiritual seeker. Drawing upon the timeless, non-dual wisdom of Advaita Vedanta, Swami Sarvapriyananda guided an audience of over 400 attendees through an inquiry into the nature of the

Self as our deepest identity. The talk was held at the Braggs Lecture Theatre, University of Adelaide (City East Campus).

On Sunday, 16 August, he gave a talk on Vedanta and Spiritual Life at the Vedanta Centre, which was followed by a short Q&A session and Meet & Greet over coffee-tea-snacks.



Swami Sarvapriyananda at the Centre

Brisbane

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

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Contact: Swami Atmeshananda (07) 3818 9986

URL: www.vedantabrisbane.org

Daily Activities

- Meditation and the chanting of hymns were conducted between 6.30 am and 7.15 am on all days.
- Vesper service (Aaratrikam), bhajans, and readings from The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna were held between 6.30 pm and 7.15 pm.

Regular Activities

- Sunday mornings:** a) Yoga class (from 7.45 am to 9.15 am) b) Class on Upnishads (10:00 am – 11:00 am). (c) Bala Sangha (moral and religious education for children) classes from 10:00 am to

11:00 am during school term as a 5-weekly course.

- **Tuesdays:** Class on Brahma Sutras (from 11 am to 12 noon)
- **Mondays & Wednesdays:** Interviews with applicants for prospective lending through NILS (No Interest Loan Scheme) at the centre by appointment. People who are doing it hard avail of loans upto \$2000 repayable through their government payments. This is an initiative of the Wesley Mission's Good Shepherd organisation.
- **Fridays:** The Centre's volunteers cooked food at the Centre's soup kitchen for the benefit of the needy. An average of 300 meals per week is packed into containers and frozen. They are distributed free of cost through the Westside Community Centre, the Gailes Community Centre, City Reach Incorporated, Kingston East Neighbourhood Group, Beenleigh Community Neighbourhood Centre, and Birch Foundation.

The Centre's Food Bank also distributed groceries to the needy. Hampers, along with cooked food, fruits and vegetables and free bread was distributed to the needy. On an average, 12 food hampers are distributed.

- **Saturdays (monthly) :** Study of Srimad Bhagavad Gita (5.30 pm to 6.30 pm) organized by the Gold Coast Vedanta Group on the last Saturday of every month.
- Chanting of the Sri Ramanama Sankirtanam was held fortnightly at the Centre on Ekadashi days (7:00 pm – 8:00 pm).
- **Monthly Class** on Vivekachudamani on the first Wednesday of every month (6.30

pm. to 7.30 pm.) at the Toowoomba council Library.

- **Monthly Class** on 'Ashtavakra Gita' at 101 Sharpless Drive, Springfield Lakes, on a fixed day of the month.
- Devotees took turns in decorating and worshipping Sri Ramakrishna's image every week at the Sri Selva Vinayagar temple, South Maclean.
- On Saturdays, Maa Saradas Kitchen prepares and sells affordable meals to the community, serving an average of 120 people each week. The operation is run efficiently by dedicated volunteers.
- On demand, a Justice of Peace (JP) renders service at the Centre from 8.30 am to 10 am on Saturdays



Guru Purnima Celebration

Celebrations

- Guru Purnima was celebrated on 29 July. Chanting of mantras and other hymns, devotional music, a talk on Significance of

Guru and distribution of dinner prasad were the main features of this event.

- Sri Krishna Janmashtami puja was conducted on 4 September. Swami Atmeshananda conducted the puja and led the devotees in chanting hymns and bhajans. Br. Devapriya read from the Life of Sri Krishna. Prasad was distributed to everyone after the celebrations.



Sri Krishna Janmashtami Celebration

Prema, an Ayurveda practitioner, and Music therapy by Donald Wingard.



International Yoga Day Celebration

- A music performance on the sarangi by renowned musician Sangeet Mishra was organised at the Centre on the 21st June. He was accompanied by Paramjeet Namdhari on the tabla. A memorial prayer for Mrs. Jayshree Kapadia, former Treasurer and an ardent devotee of the Centre, who passed away on 28 May 2026, was also organised on this occasion.
- Swami Sarvapriyananda, Minister-in-Charge of the Vedanta Society of New York, led a Spiritual Retreat on the Taittiriya Upanishad at the Springfield Lakes Centre from 28 – 30, August which was attended by 135 people. The retreat also featured two talks by Swami Sunishthananda from Melbourne. On 30 August, Swami Sarvapriyananda addressed a crowd of nearly 350 on the topic of “Finding Peace” at the University of Southern Queensland, Springfield Campus.
- A Satsang was held at the Centre on 6 September highlighted by an uplifting devotional music programme performed by acclaimed artist Mr. Rahim Zullah. Devotees gathered to offer prayers in memory of long-time devotee Rambhaben Raniga following her passing. Deep prayers

Other Activities & News

- On the 20th of June, the Centre celebrated International Yoga Day. The day consisted of yoga exercises, meditation, soulful music, Talk on Healthy Living by Brigitte

were also extended for two dedicated Ma Saradas Kitchen volunteers, Kanaga and Suhasini, who went missing in Nepal during their pilgrimage to Kailash Manasarovar.



Swami Sarvapriyananda's visit to Brisbane

Daily Activities

- Evening Aaratrikam and prayers were conducted every evening at the Centre.

Regular Activities

- Swami Dhyanananda continued his monthly lecture series on the Mundaka Upanishad. Lectures were held on 13 June, 25 July and 15 August.

Other Activities & News

- Swami Sarvapriyananda from the Vedanta Society of New York visited the Canberra Ashram on 20 August. He delivered a lecture the same evening titled "Harmonising and Integrating the Four Yogas on the Journey to the Divine". The public lecture was held at the Manning Clark Hall at the Australian National University.



Swami Sarvapriyananda's visit to Canberra

Canberra

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Melbourne

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 URL: www.vedantamelbourne.org

Daily Activities

- Evening Vesper Services (including Aaratrikam, bhajans, readings from the Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Vivekananda lit-

erature, and meditation) were held daily from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

Regular Activities

Weekly Scriptural Classes and Guided Meditation Sessions were conducted as follows:

- **Isha Upanishad** – 1st, 2nd and 3rd Tuesdays: 7.30 pm – 8.30 pm.
- **The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna** – 4th and 5th (if any) Tuesdays: 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm.
- **Narada Bhakti Sutras** – Thursdays: 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm.
- **Guided Meditation** – Sundays: 10:00 am to 10:30 am.
- **Shrimad Bhagavad Gita** – Sundays: 10:30 am to 11:30 am.

Celebrations

- Guru Purnima was celebrated on Sunday, 2 August at Mulgrave Community Centre. The program included special worship, and bhajans by devotees and the Children's Group. Swami Sunishthananda delivered a talk on the significance of Guru Purnima. The event concluded with the sharing of prasadam.



Guru Purnima Celebration

- Shri Krishna Janmashtami was celebrated on Sunday, 06 September at Oakleigh Hall. The program included special worship, Shyama Naama Sankirtana, and bhajans by devotees. The event concluded

with the sharing of prasadam.



Sri Krishna Janmashtami Celebration

Other Activities & News

- A Half-Day Retreat was held at the Vedanta Centre premises on Sunday, 21 June from 10 am to 4.15 pm. The satsang started with Guided Meditation followed by chanting and bhajans.



Half-Day Retreat: 21 June, 2026

There were talks in two sessions on topics "The Art of Inner Freedom" and "Redefining success and Failure". After the lunch break there was a Group Discussion session on the theme, "Seeing God in All" which ended with key reflections and takeaways. 40 persons registered for the event.



Talk at the Bengali Association of Victoria

- Swami Sunishthananda was invited by the Bengali Association of Victoria to deliver a

talk on the topic “Detachment without Indifference” on the evening of Sunday 19 July at Glen Waverley Community Centre.

- The Honourable Mr Matt Gregg, Federal Member of Parliament for the Deakin electorate, visited our Centre on Monday, 27 July at 3:00 pm. He was warmly welcomed by members of the Managing Committee. During his visit, he toured the Centre and spent approximately an hour interacting with the members and familiarising himself with the Centre and its activities.



A visit by Hon. Mr Matt Gregg, Federal MP

- Swami Sarvapriyananda, Minister-in-Charge of the Vedanta Society of New York, visited the Vedanta Centre of Melbourne from the evening of Sunday, 16 August to the morning of Thursday, 20 August. He was accompanied by Swami Manyananda, resident monk of the Vedanta Centre of Adelaide.

On the evening of 16 August a public talk by Swami Sarvapriyananda on “Purposeful Living with Vedanta” was organised at Springvale City Hall and attended by approximately 800 people. The talk was followed by an engaging conversation on “Mindfulness and Studies in Consciousness”, featuring Prof. Craig Hassed, Professor at the Centre for Consciousness and Contemplative Studies, Monash Uni-

versity, in conversation with Swami Sarvapriyananda. The session was moderated by Mr Goutam Basak.

On 17 and 18 August a Spiritual Retreat with Swami Sarvapriyananda was organised at Santhom Grove, Wesburn, Victoria, with approximately 130 participants.

A Meet and Greet for members and volunteers of the Vedanta Centre was organised on the evening of 19 August providing an opportunity for devotees and volunteers to interact with Swami Sarvapriyananda. Swami Sarvapriyananda departed for Canberra on the morning of Thursday, 20 August.



Swami Sarvapriyananda's visit to Melbourne

Perth

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Daily Activities

- Aaratrikam is performed each evening by a person or family taking responsibility for it.

Regular Activities

- A monthly Satsang is conducted on Sunday mornings, featuring Aarati, prayers, and bhajan devotional singing, followed by the distribution of prasadam. On occasions when a visiting monk is present, the satsang is held after Aaratrikam and includes a spiritual discourse by the visiting Swami.



Monthly Satsang

In June, Swami Manyananda visited Perth from the 18th till the 20th. He performed the Aarati and continued the talks on the Mahisasura Mardini Stotram.

Swami Sunishthananda visited Perth on the 24th and 25th of July. He gave a talk on “Guru Purnima”. We had a session of Guided Meditation and a Q&A session as well.

Other Activities & News

- Swami Sarvapriyananda, Minister-in-Charge of the Vedanta Society of New York visited Perth from the 13th to 15th of August. Swami Manyananda also was in Perth with him.
- On the 14th morning, devotees met Swami Sarvapriyananda at the Centre. It was followed by the Swamis sharing lunch prasadam with the devotees. In the evening, Swami Sarvapriyananda delivered a talk in the University of Western Australia on “Interfaith Dialogue and Global Peace”.



Swami Sarvapriyananda's visit to Perth

Sydney

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URL: www.vedantaaustralia.org

Daily Activities

- The shrine was open from 7:00 am to 1:00 pm and 4:00 pm to 8:30 pm seven days a week. Aaratrikam, bhajans, and readings from The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna were conducted from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The times change on special occasions.

Regular Activities

- Swami Dhanyananda conducted classes on Vivekachudamani on Sunday mornings from 10:30 am to 11:30 am.
- Held every Sunday from 10:30 am to 11:30 am, Bala Sangha classes cater to children aged 5 to 11. The program includes moral and spiritual lessons, drama, and movement activities.

- The Vivekananda Youth Group conducted online classes on Sunday evenings, from 5:30 to 6:30 pm. The group is designed for young people between the ages of 12 and 25. The classes are fully online, interactive, and participants are encouraged to ask questions.
- Books of the Ramakrishna/Vivekananda literature were circulated via the Vedanta Centre's bookstore and online via the Spiritual Bookstore website.
- Yoga Classes were conducted by Sudhir Mooray on Saturdays from 9:30 am to 11:00 am and Sundays from 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm.
- Ramanama Sankirtanam was conducted on ekadashi days after the vesper service.
- Devotees also received spiritual counselling and guidance.

Celebrations

• The New Shrine Hall:

The relocation and dedication of the new Shrine Hall were celebrated on the auspicious occasion of Snan Yatra, Monday, 29 June. Swamis Atmeshananda, Sunishthananda and Manyananda – in-Charge of the Brisbane, Melbourne, and Adelaide Vedanta Centres, respectively – graced the occasion.

Designed to better serve the community, the new Shrine Hall offers expanded seating capacity, enhanced lighting, and improved accessibility.

- The festivities began on the preceding morning, Sunday, 28 June with traditional rituals, including the Sri Vidya Ganapathi and Navagraha Homam, performed by priests.

Following the sacred ceremonies, distinguished dignitaries addressed the audience sharing thoughtful reflections.

The esteemed dignitaries included Ms. Donna Davis MP (State Member for Parramatta), Cr. Sreeni Pillamarri (Councillor for Epping Ward), Cr. (Dr.) Judy Greenwood and Cr. Sameer Pandey (Councillors for Parramatta Ward), and Cr. Michael Ng (Councillor for Rosehill Ward).



Addresses by Swami Atmeshananda, The Hon. Donna Davis MP (Member for Parramatta), and Cr. Sameer Pandey.



Addresses by Cr Sreeni Pillamarri, Cr Judy Greenwood, and Cr Michael Ng

The morning concluded with an uplifting devotional music performance and the distribution of Prasad to all attendees.

- On auspicious Snan Yatra day itself, the morning programme commenced with special worship dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna, followed by a sacred

Homam and Aarati. Enlightening talks were delivered by senior Swamis Atmeshananda and Sunishthananda, followed by the distribution of after-noon prasad to all the attendees of the ceremony.



New Shrine Dedication Ceremony

Evening celebrations began with Aaratrikam, followed by chanting by the children of the Bala and Youth Sangha, along with a soul-stirring vocal and instrumental concert. The event concluded with the distribution of prasad to all attendees.



Cultural Programme



The Hon. Donna Davis MP
and Cr Michael Ng alongside
monastics of the Vedanta Centre

- On the sacred Sri Guru Purnima day, 29 July, the special gathering commenced with Aaratrikam and worship, that set a deeply devotional tone for the event. Later, the children of the Bala and Youth Sangha presented a captivating presentation highlighting the inspiring life and teachings of Jagadguru Adi Shankaracharya. The spiritual significance of the teacher was further explored during an insightful talk by Swami Dhanyananda on the sacred role of the Guru in one's path. The program concluded on a blessed note with the distribution of sacred prasad to all attendees.



Guru Purnima Celebration



Sri Krishna Janmashtami Celebration

- Sri Krishna Janmashtami was observed at the Centre on 4 September. The evening devotional programme commenced at 6:45 pm with the sacred Aratrikam and Puja, setting a serene and spiritual tone for the gathering. At 7:15 pm, the youth and children of the Bala Sangha presented their heartwarming devotional offerings, followed by Shyama Nama Sankirtan and bhajans. The solemn occasion concluded peacefully at 8:30 pm with the distribution of sacred prasad to all present.

Other Activities & News

- Swami Sarvapriyananda, Minister-in-Charge of the Vedanta Society of New York,

visited the Sydney Centre from 21 to 27 August. From the afternoon of 21 August to the morning of 23 August, Swami Sarvapriyananda conducted a spiritual retreat at the Baden Powell Activity Centre in Pen-
nant Hills for over 170 attendees.



Swami Sarvapriyananda's visit to Sydney

Following the retreat on 23 August, he delivered two insightful lectures: a morning talk on "Perfection in Every Experience" at the Vedanta Centre of Sydney, attended by

over 400 people and followed by distribution of prasad to all attendees, and an evening talk titled “Belonging in a Divided World” at the University of Western Sydney’s Parramatta Campus, which drew an audience of about 700.

resident monk followed by the distribution of lunch prasad.



Working Bee in action



Satsang following a Working Bee session.

- **Working Bee:** Volunteers assembled each Saturday to assist in the regular maintenance of the Centre. Their contributions encompassed a wide range of tasks, including gardening, painting, cleaning, carpentry, and other essential activities that ensured the Centre remained well cared for and welcoming. Each session concluded with an engaging satsang conducted by a

Parables of Sri Ramakrishna

(From the book *Tales and Parables Of Sri Ramakrishna*)

Sri Ramakrishna was a masterful storyteller who used simple, everyday examples and observations to convey profound spiritual truths. His parables offer practical guidance for leading a noble life and striving for God-realisation; merely reflecting on these parables provides immense clarity and illuminates these timeless principles

Maya Vanishes The Moment It Is Known

A Priest was once going to the village of a disciple of his. He had no servant with him. Seeing a cobbler on the way, he addressed him, saying: "Hullo! good man, will you accompany me as a servant? You will be fed well and taken good care of if you come with me." The cobbler replied: "Sir, I am of the lowest caste. How can I come as your servant?" The priest said, "Never mind. Do not tell anybody what you are. Do not also speak to anyone, or make anybody's acquaintance." The cobbler agreed.



At twilight, while the priest was sitting at prayers in the house of his disciple, another brahmana came and said to the priest's servant, "Go and bring my shoes from there." True to the behest of his master, he made no response. The brahmana repeated his order a second time, but even then the servant remained silent. The brahmana repeated it again and again, but the cobbler did not move an inch. At last, getting annoyed, the brahmana angrily said: "Sirrah; how dare you disobey a brahmana's command? What

is your name? Are you indeed a cobbler?" The cobbler hearing this, began to tremble with fear, and looking piteously at the priest, said: "O venerable sir, I am found out. I dare not stay here any longer. Let me flee." So saying he took to his heels.

Just so, as soon as Maya is recognised, she flies away.

Faith Is The Mother Of Miracles

A milk-maid used to supply milk to a brahmana priest living on the other side of a river. Owing to the irregularities of the boat service, she could not supply him milk punctually every day. Once, being rebuked for her going late, the poor woman said, "What can I do? I start early from my house, but have to wait for a long time at the river bank for the boatman and the passengers." The priest said, "Woman! They cross the ocean of life by uttering the name of God, and can't you cross this little river?" The simple-hearted woman became very glad at heart on learning this easy means of crossing the river.



From the next day the milk was being supplied early in the morning. One day the priest said to the woman, "How is it that you are no longer late nowadays?" She said, "I cross the river by uttering the name of the Lord as you told me to do, and don't stand now in need of a boatman." The priest could not believe this and said, "Can you show me how you cross the river?" The woman took him with her and began to walk over the wa-

ter. Looking behind, the woman saw the priest in a sad plight and said, "How is it, sir, that you are uttering the name of God with your mouth, but at the same time with your hands you are trying to keep your cloth untouched by water? You do not fully rely on Him."

Entire resignation and absolute faith in God are at the root of all miraculous deeds.



The Bhakta's Renunciation Results From Love

Swami Vivekananda

(From PARA-BHAKTI OR SUPREME DEVOTION, The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 3)

In this passage, Swami Vivekananda explains that love is the singular, fundamental force driving all human action—manifesting constructively as virtue and selflessness when properly directed, or destructively as selfishness and vice when misdirected. Bhakti-Yoga serves as the science of redirecting this inherent longing away from mundane, sensory attachments and toward its ultimate source: God, the divine essence behind all earthly beauty. By viewing life as a detached observer, one realises that every desire—even the most sensual—is an unconscious search for the Divine. Through intense devotion (Anuraga) to the Highest, lesser worldly attachments naturally fall away (Vairagya), ultimately ushering the seeker into supreme devotion (Para-Bhakti), where all petty distinctions dissolve into a lived experience of universal love and divine oneness.

[Love is ubiquitous in nature in both good and bad]

We see love everywhere in nature. Whatever in society is good and great and sublime is the working out of that love; whatever in society is very bad, nay diabolical, is also the ill-directed working out of the same emotion of love. It is this same emotion that gives us the pure and holy conjugal love between husband and wife as well as the sort of love which goes to satisfy the lowest forms of animal passion. The emotion is the same, but its manifestation is different in different cases. It is the same feeling of love, well or ill directed, that impels one man to do good and to give all he has to the poor, while it makes another man cut the throats of his brethren

and take away all their possessions. The former loves others as much as the latter loves himself. The direction of the love is bad in the case of the latter, but it is right and proper in the other case. The same fire that cooks a meal for us may burn a child, and it is no fault of the fire if it does so; the difference lies in the way in which it is used. Therefore love, the intense longing for association, the strong desire on the part of two to become one – and it may be, after all, of all to become merged in one – is being manifested everywhere in higher or lower forms as the case may be.

[The science of higher love]

Bhakti-Yoga is the science of higher love. It shows us how

to direct it; it shows us how to control it, how to manage it, how to use it, how to give it a new aim, as it were, and from it obtain the highest and most glorious results, that is, how to make it lead us to spiritual blessedness. Bhakti-Yoga does not say, "Give up"; it only says, "Love; love the Highest!" – and everything low naturally falls off from him, the object of whose love is the Highest.

"I cannot tell anything about Thee except that Thou art my love. Thou art beautiful, Oh, Thou art beautiful! Thou art beauty itself." What is after all really required of us in this Yoga is that our thirst after the beautiful should be directed to God. What is the beauty in the human face, in

the sky, in the stars, and in the moon? It is only the partial apprehension of the real all-embracing Divine Beauty. "He shining, everything shines. It is through His light that all things shine." Take this high position of Bhakti which makes you forget at once all your little personalities. Take yourself away from all the world's little selfish clings. Do not look upon humanity as the centre of all your human and higher interests. Stand as a witness, as a student, and observe the phenomena of nature. Have the feeling of personal non-attachment with regard to man, and see how this mighty feeling of love is working itself out in the world. Sometimes a little friction is produced, but that is only in the course of the struggle to attain the higher real love. Sometimes there is a little fight or a little fall; but it is all only by the way. Stand aside, and freely let these frictions come. You feel the frictions only when you are in the current of the world, but when you are outside of it simply as a witness and as a student, you will be able to see that there are millions and millions of channels in which God is manifesting Himself as Love.



"Wherever there is any bliss, even though in the most sensual of things, there is a spark of that Eternal Bliss which is the Lord Himself." Even in the lowest kinds of attraction there is the germ of divine love. One of the names of the Lord in Sanskrit is Hari, and this means that He attracts all things to Himself. His is in fact the only attraction worthy of human hearts. Who can attract a soul really? Only He! Do you think dead matter can truly attract the soul? It never did, and never will. When you see a man going after a beautiful face, do you think that it is the handful of arranged material molecules which really attract the man? Not at all. Behind those material particles there must be and is the play of divine influence and divine love. The ignorant man does not know it, but yet, con-

sciously or unconsciously, he is attracted by it and it alone. So even the lowest forms of attraction derive their power from God Himself. "None, O beloved, ever loved the husband for the husband's sake; it is the Atman, the Lord who is within, for whose sake the husband is loved." Loving wives may know this or they may not; it is true all the same. "None, O beloved, ever loved the wife for the wife's sake, but it is the Self in the wife that is loved." Similarly, no one loves a child or anything else in the world except on account of Him who is within. The Lord is the great magnet, and we are all like iron filings; we are being constantly attracted by Him, and all of us are struggling to reach Him. All this struggling of ours in this world is surely not intended for selfish ends. Fools do not know what they are doing: the work of their life is, after all, to approach the great magnet. All the tremendous struggling and fighting in life is intended to make us go to Him ultimately and be one with Him.

[What constitutes Bhakta's renunciation]

The Bhakti-Yogi, however, knows the meaning of life's struggles; he understands it.

He has passed through a long series of these struggles and knows what they mean and earnestly desires to be free from the friction thereof; he wants to avoid the clash and go direct to the centre of all attraction, the great Hari. This is the renunciation of the Bhakta. This mighty attraction in the direction of God makes all other attractions vanish for him. This mighty infinite love of God which enters his heart leaves no place for any other love to live there. How can it be otherwise? Bhakti fills his heart with the divine waters of the ocean of love, which is God Himself; there is no place there for little loves. That is to say, the Bhakta's renunciation is that Vairagya or non-attachment for all things that are not God

which results from Anuraga or great attachment to God.

This is the ideal preparation for the attainment of the supreme Bhakti. When this renunciation comes, the gate opens for the soul to pass through and reach the lofty regions of supreme devotion or Para-Bhakti. Then it is that we begin to understand what Para-Bhakti is; and the man who has entered into the inner shrine of the Para-Bhakti alone has the right to say that all forms and symbols are useless to him as aids to religious realisation. He alone has attained that supreme state of love commonly called the brotherhood of man; the rest only talk. He sees no distinctions; the mighty ocean of love has entered into him, and he sees not man in

man, but beholds his Beloved everywhere. Through every face shines to him his Hari. The light in the sun or the moon is all His manifestation. Wherever there is beauty or sublimity, to him it is all His. Such Bhaktas are still living; the world is never without them. Such, though bitten by a serpent, only say that a messenger came to them from their Beloved. Such men alone have the right to talk of universal brotherhood. They feel no resentment; their minds never react in the form of hatred or jealousy. The external, the sensuous, has vanished from them for ever. How can they be angry, when, through their love, they are always able to see the Reality behind the scenes?



The Spiritual Heritage Of India

Swami Sridharananda

Starting with this issue, REACH is delighted to present a serialised release of The Spiritual Heritage of India by Swami Sridharananda. Based on an acclaimed series of five lectures delivered in Vadodara, Gujarat, from December 23–27, 1981, this material was recorded by Mr. Nanu B. Amin and later edited by the Swami himself for publication in April 1989. We invite our readers to embark on this spiritual journey with us over the coming issues.

Introduction

The spiritual heritage of India encompasses the gamut of Indian thought for a period of no less than five thousand years. It is probably a highly conservative estimate of the time period that I will try to place before you in five short lectures – in approximately five hours. Therefore, some of the important aspects of the thoughts can only be dwelt upon rather fleetingly.

I feel a bit diffident as some of you may be well-versed in this subject. You may also know that world famous thinkers and philosophers have put their hearts and souls into the subject of Indology, and who, through their hard work, have produced excellent treatises and books. They dedicated their lives to these studies. Especially in Germany, Indology was a subject of great fascination, as Germans claimed their own oriental connections and descent. Professor Max Muller was the first person who wrote about Indian thought in a masterly fashion. He was followed by Professor Paul Deussen. The English people, who ruled India for about 200 years, also had many great scholars, and giant intellects, who worked on this subject. Professors Morehead and Brumfield are two, among many others, maybe mentioned in this connection. In India, the former President Dr Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, accomplished a Herculean task in his book, 'Indian Philosophy'. So did Professor S.N. Das Gupta in seven huge volumes, followed by Professor Hiriyanna of Mysore. There were also Chandradhar Sharma and a galaxy of others. So it really makes me feel a bit diffident to talk to you on this subject.

I had the good fortune and privilege of having had a teacher who was steeped in our holy past – a typical *pundit* as it is known – of the Jha family, the family – which has produced such stalwarts as Dr Amarnath Jha, Ganganath Jha and others. I had the great privilege of studying under *pundit* Ananda Jha, who comes from the famous place of Mithila, Darbhanga, and who was retained as Professor Emeritus in the Darbhanga College of Indology. Through him, I had the privilege of studying portions of the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and other philosophical literature of India. After these studies, I find that all the works of Max Muller, Paul Deussen or the Indian authors are extremely scholastic and highly academic in character. To some extent, people who have the desire to know and learn, but who do not possess much background in such studies, who do not have the pre-conditions necessary to understand and appreciate the norms and subtleties of Indian philosophy, find them too difficult

and confusing. So I thought it would not be out of place to present before you in a language you will understand but without compromising their essence, the main themes of their teachings. With this end in view, I gathered courage to speak to you on a subject that is really vast. I shall try to do as much justice to it as I possibly can.

As we begin, let us not forget that religion and spiritual wisdom are meant to help human beings improve the quality of their lives. If we only think of spiritual science and philosophy at the level of scholasticism, we may not give true importance to their spirit. I shall always try to place before you how all of us can attend to the facets of life as mentioned in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, and how we can qualitatively improve our personalities and our lives.

A confluence of individual human beings living together in a community has given rise to the concept known as society. We, being members of the community, if each one of us can qualitatively improve our personality and the substance of our life, the whole community will progress. My endeavour will be to keep human beings at the fulcrum, as the centre of the whole show. Let us take up the question of how the concept of spiritual oneness, of which India is so proud, developed. We have reason to be proud because nowhere else in the world but in India has such a vigorous pursuit ever taken place – at the level of intellect, at the level of rationality, and at the level of being and becoming. The concept still endures. There are some people who try to activate it and translate it in the modern world. Therefore, let us start right from the beginning and see how we can help ourselves by continued study of this subject – The Spiritual Heritage of India.

The Vedic Age

The Beginnings

In the early days of the Vedic Age, there was a great appreciation for the throngs of nature. In regard to geographic location, a mass migration¹ of population had taken place about 6000 years ago. The ancestors of modern India came all the way from central Asia. A group of them stayed back in what is known today as Iran and the other group migrated through Afghanistan and arrived into the Indus Valley, settling in the Indo-Gangetic plains. They brought along their culture and traditions. They came along with all they had gathered from their forefathers. They had their own hoary traditions, their own past, own wisdom. When they migrated into India, they were protected by the natural geography of the land—in the North by the Himalayas and in the South, West and East by the seas. They came and saw that the land was extremely fertile. The climate was pleasant, with the snowy Himalayan landscape. They saw sub-Himalayan forests, and perennial rivers flowing out of the Himalayan glaciers. They had never imagined such beauty of land, such majesty of landscape.

¹“Different scholars have made different conjectures about the original home of the *Aryas*. Swami Vivekananda was firm in his belief that that the *Aryas* had not come from any place outside India. However, from the Punjab, the *Aryas* gradually spread all over northern India, which tract then came to be known as *Aryavarta*. In course of time they crossed the Vindhya range and spread their religion in southern India. An *Arya* sage, Agastya by name, is said to have led this march of the *Aryas* to the south” – ‘Hinduism at a Glance’, by Swami Nirvedananda, Ramakrishna Mission Students’ Home, pp.13.

The climate of the place and the fertility of the soil amazed them. They had probably never seen such bountiful nature before. They may have probably heard and that is why they decided to migrate to this part of the world. When they came, they found to their utter surprise, the majesty, beauty and bountifulness of nature and an enormous, geographically protected land, with total security.

Today's thinkers tell us that a society prospers only when its members have security and enough to eat, enough for their daily requirements. To prosper, energies should not be entirely devoted to day-to-day struggle for living. Only with energy to spare are the higher pursuits possible. By God's grace that is what happened when these people came to India. They found that living conditions were uncomplicated and they had ample surplus time and energy. They had much time to ponder over their traditions.

They responded euphorically to the majesty of natural beauty and phenomena. This is the origin of the *Rig Veda*. The first and foremost *mantras*² and hymns are nothing but outpourings of a heart! These hymns, *suktas*³ and *mantras* were very simple - as simple as the joyous outpourings of a child when the child sees something new, something novel, something majestic, something highly ennobling and inspiring. The appreciation of *surya*⁴, the sun - the glorious sunrise, the scorching midday sun and the wonderful pensive sunset - stirred their imagination. Our forefathers were great observers. That is evident from the various subjects they took up for their study. They did not confine themselves to observing the sun; they watched the waxing waning of the moon; saw the changing seasons coming one after the other; they saw the wind, the thunderstorms and the darkening of clouds. It is interesting to note that in the *Rig Veda*, there are prayers to the rain gods to give them timely rain to grow crops.

No doubt the language of these *mantras* in the *Rig Veda Samhita*⁵ is much different from the Sanskrit language that is studied today. This change was caused by the passage of time. People who have studied the science of grammar written by the famous *Rishi*⁶ Panini in his book known as *Ashtadhyayi*⁷ (the eight chaptered one), know that the author mentions two distinct grammars - one for the Vedic language and one for the Sanskrit language that we have kept alive today - the *Pratisakhya*⁸ grammar and the *Loukika*⁹ grammar. When we study the whole gamut of the *Rig Veda Samhita*, we find the language of the first *sutras* and *mantras* are very archaic - very difficult for those

²*Mantra* - sacred utterance, a numinous sound, a syllable, word or phonemes, or group of words in Sanskrit that have the power to transport the mind to high levels of consciousness. Literally, 'man' means mind and 'tra' means vehicle or instrument.

³*Suktam* - Made of two words, *su+uktam*. 'Su' means 'good or well' and 'ukta' means 'said'. *Suktam* means 'well said'. Refers to Vedic hymns or prayers or philosophic realises.

⁴*Surya* - The sun or solar.

⁵*Samhita* - Literally means 'put together' and 'a methodically, rule-based combination of text or verses'. *Samhita* refers to the early Vedic texts, consisting of *mantras*, hymns, prayers, litanies and benedictions.

⁶*Rishi* - A sage or seer who has composed his realisations into verses.

⁷*Ashtadhyayi* - The *Ashtadhyayi* is one of the earliest known texts on Sanskrit grammar composed by Panini circa 5th century B.C. The book has in 8 chapters and approximately 4000 verses (*Ashta* means eight and *Adhyaya* means chapter).

⁸*Pratisakhya* - refers to the rhythmic chanting of ancient Vedic texts.

⁹*Loukika* - traditional rituals relating to life in society, associated with birth, marriage, death etc. A complementary term often used is *Vaidika*, meaning relating to the *Vedas*.

who have only a nodding acquaintance with the Sanskrit language as it is followed today. It would not be out of place to consider that probably that is the language the *Aryas* brought along with them when they migrated to India. The initial euphoric expressions of the human heart were conveyed in that language which is distinctly different from the language we find in the later *Upanishads*. Sanskrit, as it is known to us today, is probably the language that came along with later migrants from central Asia by way of land now known as Iran. It may be surprising to know that there is a great deal of similarity in words used by the Vedic *rishis* at the later time and the Persian language, expressing the ancient ideas of Iran. We can safely conclude that our ancestors did not come without a language. They came with a language that had a character of its own - extremely expressive but a little archaic and difficult to follow because of different grammar.

This is the starting point of the civilisation known as the Vedic civilisation. We later find that there were people already residing in that part of India when the migrants came in; it was not a land mass without human habitation. The original population came to be known as *Bhumiputras*,¹⁰ the sons of the soil, the *Adivasis*,¹¹ as referred to in India. This word *Bhumiputras*, however surprising as it may sound, is used in Malaysia even today; immigrants there are now distinguished from *Bhumiputras*, the sons of the soil! Kindly see how culture moves about; you cannot compartmentalise it. You may compartmentalise a physical form, you may compartmentalise material things - keep them under lock and key - but not cultural ideas. The culture of a people in the domain of ideas continues to move about. In olden days, it took a long time; today it takes only seconds via satellite communication systems.

(to be continued ...)



¹⁰*Bhumiputras* - Literally 'sons of the soil', i.e. indigenous people.

¹¹*Adivasis* - Original inhabitants, indigenous people, in contrast to 'minorities'. *Adivasi* is the term given by the migrating *Aryans* to a group of original native tribes of India (similar to the Aborigines of Australia and Canada).