



REACH

Newsletter of Vedanta Centres of Australia

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Motto:

*Atmano mokshartham
jagad hitaya cha,*

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



Various Temples at the Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math

The headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Howrah (West Bengal), India as seen from the Ganges

Sayings and Teachings

God is omnipresent

“You see many stars in the sky at night, but not when the sun rises. Can you therefore say that there are no stars in the heavens during the day? O man, because you cannot find God in the days of your ignorance say not that there is no God.”

--- Sri Ramakrishna.

Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Kolkata; Page 1.

Various ways to God

“Holy men are born on earth to show people the way to God. They teach differently. There are many paths leading to the same goal. Therefore the teachings of all saints are true.”

--- Sri Sarada Devi.

Ibid., Page 20.

CALENDAR OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Function	Centre	Date
Sri Krishna Janmashtami	Melbourne	Sunday, 9th September 2007
	Sydney	Monday, 3rd September 2007
Sri Sri Durga Puja	Sydney	Friday, 19th October 2007
Inauguration of New Centre at 2, Stewart St, Ermington	Sydney	Tentatively scheduled for 16, 17 and 18th November 07
Birth Anniversary of Holy Mother	Sydney	Sunday 30th December 2007
	Brisbane	Sunday, 6th January 2008

Express the inherent divinity

“All power is within you, you can do anything and everything. Believe in that, and do not believe that you are weak.....You can do anything and everything, without even the guidance of any one. All power is there. Stand up and express the divinity within you....Arise, Awake, Sleep no more. Within each of you there is the power to remove all wants and all miseries. Believe in this, and that power will be manifested.”

--- Swami Vivekananda.

Ibid., Page 34.

Welcome

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

News and activities of Vedanta Centres of Australia and New Zealand

For the period From February 2007 to July 2007

ADELAIDE CENTRE

Monthly activities:

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

a talk by Swami Sridharananda on “*Vedanta: What is it and is it relevant today?*” The programme was very well-received by over 125 devotees.

On Sunday April 29, 2007, as part of a small fund-raising activity, a drama recording on the *Jagat Janani Ma Sarada* was screened at the Ganesha Temple, 3A Dwyer Rd, Oaklands Park SA. The devotees thoroughly enjoyed the show and dinner *prasada* after the show. Devotees were glad to interact with Swami Damodarananda, a senior monk, Swami Sridharananda, President,

Monthly activities:

Swami Atmeshananda visited Brisbane regularly once every month. He gave talks on *Srimad-Bhagavad Gita* and other spiritual topics. Swami Sridharananda also visited Brisbane from the 5th to 8th of June 2007.

Celebrations:

The birth anniversaries of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna were observed at the Centre on the 13th of January 2007 and 10th of March 2007 respectively. On these occasions, after a short worship, Swami Atmeshananda led the devotees in singing of devotional hymns and spoke on the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna.

The Centre conducted its Third Anniversary Programme on the 28th July 2007 at the St. Aidan's Girls' School, Corinda, Qld. Mrs. Julie Attwood, Member of Parliament for Mt. Ommaney was the guest of honour on the occasion.



Inaugural function of the Adelaide Chapter: worship in progress

Celebrations:

The inaugural function of the Adelaide Chapter of the Vedanta Centres of Sydney, Australia was held on Saturday, April 28, 2007 at the Dulwich Community Centre. A special worship of Sri Ramakrishna with *sixteen types of offerings* was performed to invoke the blessings of the Divine on the occasion. *Pushpanjali* (flower offerings) were made by the devotees after *homam* (offerings through sacred fire). In the course of the worship various songs were sung by the local devotees including Mangalacharanam (Invocation), Shanti Mantras, Chanting of Vishnu Sahasranamam and other Bhajans. Swami Chandrashekhara, assisted by Swami Atmeshananda, performed the elaborate puja ceremonies. The programme also included

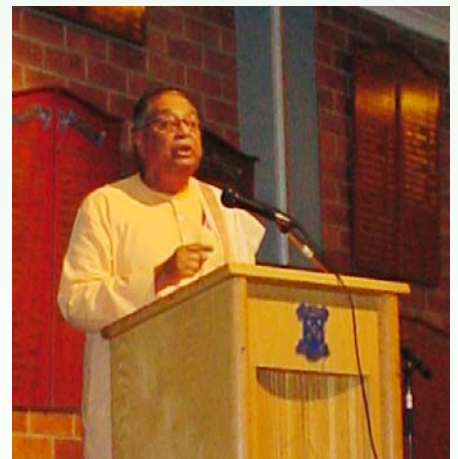
the Vedanta Centres in Australia, Swamis Atmeshananda, Chandrashekhara and Tadananda from the Sydney Centre.

The birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated on the 24th of March 2007. Swami Sridharananda spoke on “The Life and Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna”.

BRISBANE CENTRE

Daily activities:

Morning worship, evening *arati*, *bhajans*, and reading from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* are the regular activities at the Centre in **181 Burbong Street, Chapel Hill, QLD 4073**, (phone no. 07-3720 0228). A resident volunteer looks after the day-to-day activities at the Centre.



Swami Sridharananda addressing the audience



Mrs. Julie Attwood, MP, speaking Kolattam dance performance



Bharatanatyam performance

The programme consisted of Devotional music, Bharatanatyam, Kolattam (dance with sticks), Dance in Tagore style, and speeches by Swami Sridharanandaji, Mr. Maha Sinnathamby and the Guest of Honour. The programme was attended by more than 400 persons. At the end of the programme a sumptuous dinner was served to all.

CANBERRA CENTRE

Swami Sridharananda conducted classes on *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita* twice every month at the Majura community Centre, Canberra. Parlour talks were given by him on *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* once every month. Talks were also delivered by the Swami on the birth anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Contacts: Mr. J. Venkataraman, Secretary - 02-6258 7612 and Mr. Ian Doherty, Treasurer - 02-6247 8519.

MELBOURNE CENTRE

1. Daily Activities:

A daily vesper service is held at the Centre at **7 Judy Court, Vermont, Vic 3133** from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Vedic chanting; hymns and

songs, scriptural readings and meditation are conducted after the vesper service. A resident volunteer looks after the services in the morning hours and on other occasions. The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, Vedanta and other spiritual literature are made available in print, audio and visual media through the bookstall during this period. For further information please contact Mr. Suresh Ravinutala, Secretary, on 03-9803 6154 and Mr. Govindan Iyer, Treasurer, on 03-9543 4091.

2. Weekly/ Monthly Activities:

The monthly discourses continued to be held on the *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita* delivered by Swami Sridharananda from Thursday to Saturday of a prescheduled week at Holmsglen TAFE. The lecture series were based on Chapter Four, the *Jnana Karma Sannyasa Yoga*, of the *Bhagavad Gita*. The recordings of these discourses are available in Audio, Video and MP3 formats.

Sunday Meetings were conducted on every second Sunday of each month from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. These entail prayer, recitation of sacred mantras, rendering of *kirtan* and *bhajans* as well as selected readings from relevant scriptures and discussions thereon. The meetings conclude with an *arati* and distribution of *prasada*.

3. Celebrations:

Shiva Ratri was celebrated on Friday, the 16th of February from 7 p.m. This included formal worship,

Vedic chantings, flower offerings and scriptural readings. **Sri Ramakrishna Jayanti** was celebrated on Saturday, the 24th of February beginning at 10:30 p.m. Swami Damodarananda led the programme which entailed Vedic chantings and recitations, flower offerings, devotional singing, and reading from the scriptures and concluded with an *arati* service. Lunch-*prasada* was served to all present.

The **Annual Celebration** was observed on Saturday, the 31st of March. Formal special worship and *homam* were conducted by Swami Chandrashekaranda. Swamis Atmeshananda and Atmaghanananda participated in the formal worship as well as engaged in devotional singing in the course of the worship. The prayer concluded with *pushpanjali* and an *arati*. Lunch-*prasada* was served to devotees.

A special meeting (satsang) was held in the evening at the Centre at 6 p.m.. It was attended by Swamis Atmaghanananda, Atmeshananda and Chandrashekaranda. Devotional singing was rendered before and after the vesper service and a short talk was delivered at the end. The programme concluded with dinner *prasada*.

Sri Ramanavami was celebrated on Sunday the 8th April commencing at 5:30 p.m. The programme of Vedic chantings, scriptural readings and devotional singing concluded with the evening *aratrikam*.

Visiting Monks:

Swami Damodarananda visited Melbourne on the 21st to the 28th of February 2007 en-route to Perth via Adelaide.

Swami Atmaghanananda, the head of the Ramakrishna Mission in Colombo, visited the Centre from the 30th of March to the 6th of April 2007. He was officially introduced to the audience by Swami Sridharananda in a meeting on the 30th of March 2007 with a brief description of his programme in Australia. A reception was accorded



Birthday Celebration of Swami Vivekananda at Melbourne Centre



Swami Damodarananda

Swami Atmaghanananda

to him by the devotees on Sunday, the 1st of April at St. James Uniting Church Hall, Box Hill South. The function was from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. and included a variety of cultural items by young artists, a multi-media presentation shown by the Swami depicting the relief work being done by the Ramakrishna Mission in Sri Lanka for *Internally Displaced People* and a talk on “*The Religion for Today*” by the Swami.

During his stay in Melbourne he was also invited to the homes of various devotees where he sang *bhajans* and conducted *satsangs*. On Wednesday the 4th of April a meeting was held at the Centre. After the vesper service, the Swami sang devotional songs and gave a talk after reading from the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*.

Cultural function:

Ms. Joyoti Das of Nupur Australia/ Kalamandir school of Indian dances, Melbourne, performed an



Odissi dance recital with her students and donated the proceeds of the function to the Vedanta Centre, Melbourne. The function was organised at the Alexander Theatre, Monash University, Clayton Campus, Melbourne on 2nd June 2007 at 7:30 p.m.. Her father, Mr. Bijoy Das, and all members worked very hard to make the programme a success. It was well received by the audience.

PERTH CENTRE

Inauguration:

A property located at **2B Roe Close, Bull Creek W.A. 6149** was bequeathed by a devotee to the Vedanta Centres in Australia, for the purpose of conducting its activities in Perth. After completing the necessary renovations, a branch centre in Perth was inaugurated on the 17th March 2007. Swami Damodaranandaji, a senior monk of the order, agreed to be the resident monk. He reached Perth on the 10th of March 2007.



Public meeting in Perth

On Saturday the 17th of March 2007 morning, a traditional priest performed the necessary ritualistic worship to purify the place. It was followed by a special worship to Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda, Bhagavan Buddha and Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the holy shrine was consecrated amidst *homam*, Vedic chantings, *bhajans*, prayers and meditation. On the following day, a Sunday, a public meeting was organised at the hall of local Hindu Temple. Swami Sridharananda explained about the necessity of a Centre and outlined the future activities of the new Centre. Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and Vedanta literature was also on sale for the public. The programme was well attended. Some devotees from Sydney also participated in the function.

1. Daily Activities:

Worship with offerings in the morning and vesper service at 7 p.m. are being conducted daily.

2. Weekly/ monthly Activities:

Every Saturday the **Bala Bodhi** evening classes for children and youth is being conducted from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. On Sundays, *satsangs* for the devotees start at 11:00 a.m. followed by a simple lunch-*prasada* for all. Swami Damodaranandaji meets the devotees and the visitors, and, on invitation, delivers talks at various places in Perth. Contacts: Centre 08 9313



Shrine at Perth Centre

8796, Mr. K.P.Basu Mallick, Secretary, on 0411 791 058.

SYDNEY CENTRE

1. Daily Activities:

Worship, and meditation in the morning and the vesper service followed by devotional singing in the evening form the main focus of the daily activities. Counselling, interviews and discussions with devotees are also conducted on a daily basis. The library facility is available to devotees for reference and research. The Centre maintains a bookstall which has a range of books on the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, Vedanta, Yoga and other spiritual literature. Devotional songs, discourses on *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita*, the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, *Mundaka Upanisad*, etc. are also available in various media.

2. Weekly/ monthly Activities:

a) The centre conducted the following activities in Sydney:

Swami Sridharananda conducted classes on the *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gitā* every Sunday morning from 9:45 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. at the South Strathfield Bowling Club, Augusta Street, Strathfield. In his absence, Swami Tadananda spoke on various topics.

Classes on *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* were held every Wednesday evening from 7.30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Centre in Ashfield, NSW.

b) Swami Atmeshananda conducted **Children's classes** at the Centre on Sundays, which includes chanting, singing and story telling focused on the moral and spiritual teachings.

c) Swami Sridharananda gave **spiritual instructions** to sincere spiritual seekers.

d) Many devotees have availed themselves of **spiritual counselling and guidance** and have received solace and comfort from the swamis. The swamis also visited the homes of devotees as and when required.

e) **Yogasana Classes** for adults continued to be held every Tuesday at the Centre from 7:30 p.m.

f) **Career guidance** sessions were conducted on the second Saturday of every month from 3:30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. for the new migrants to Australia to help them find suitable jobs. Mr. Abhijit Guha and his dedicated band of volunteers, conducted the sessions.

3. Celebrations:

Maha Shivaratri was celebrated on 16 February 2007 at the Centre, through the formal worship of Lord Shiva, following the vesper service. Devotees also participated in the worship by offering water, milk, honey, bel leaves and flowers during the chanting of mantras and songs.

The **birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna** was celebrated on 19 February 2007 with formal worship during the day which was followed by vesper service. Swami Sridharananda spoke about the advent of Sri Ramakrishna and its significance to the modern world.

Guru Purnima was observed on 29th July at 6:30 p.m. The programme consisted of worship, singing devotional songs, readings from selected portions of the sayings of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna depicting the importance of Guru. The functions were well attended and *prasād* was distributed to devotees after the programmes.



Group Photo at the Retreat Inset: The Satyananda Yoga Centre

4. Other Activities:

Cultural function:

A cultural function was organised on 14th of April 2007. Mrs. Purva Joshi of Malaysia presented bhajans in semi classical style. Her singing was preceded by an invocation song rendered by Ms. Mausumi Das, her student. The students of Mrs. Anursha Tharmaraja then presented a dance drama choreographed by her on '*Navarasa Ramayana*' depicting the nine primary moods in various incidents of the Ramayana. The function was a success.

Spiritual Retreat:

The Sydney Centre conducted a Spiritual Retreat from the 4th of May to 6th of May 2007 at the Satyananda Yoga Centre, Mangrove Mountain, which is an hour's drive from Sydney. A total of 52 devotees including 2 devotees from Adelaide and 2 guests from India participated in this retreat. The four monks of the Sydney Centre conducted the programme. The devotees arrived at the retreat centre on the evening of Friday, the 4th of May and soon settled into the environment of the spiritual retreat. After a light supper prepared by the Yoga Centre and volunteers, the programme began with the vesper service followed by a welcome and

introduction by Swami Sridharananda. The participants were requested to maintain silence and absorb the ambience of the retreat. The next two days were spent in chanting, meditation, talks by Swami Sridharananda, singing and silent bushwalking. Swami Sridharananda gave a three part talk on '*Mind Alone is the Cause of Bondage and Liberation*'. Yoga Nidra (yogic sleep) gave a soothing effect in between the strict routine of the retreat and was a special attraction of this year's retreat. Devotees took part in the lively question and answer session on the 6th of May which helped the participants in clarifying their understanding about spiritual life. The retreat brought about a close togetherness among the devotees. It was indeed difficult for them when they had to part at the end of the retreat.

Raffle:

Vedanta Centre urgently required funds to renovate the new acquired property at 2 Stewart Street, Ermington. A lady devotee of New Zealand donated a solitaire diamond ring and a few other devotees of Sydney also came forward to support the cause offering various prizes so that a Raffle could be organised for its fundraising programme. The diamond ring was the first prize. A return ticket to India from Sydney

for two was the second prize, a return ticket to Gold Coast from Sydney for two was the third prize and other thirteen prizes were earmarked. The devotees came forward very generously to help towards this noble cause.

On the 1st of July 2007 a cultural programme was arranged and at the end of the function, the Raffle was drawn in the presence of about 250 devotees and observers. After the invoking of the blessings of the Divine and *mangalacharana* by children, Mrs. Pushpa Jagadish rendered devotional songs, the students of Mrs. Hamsa Venkat presented dances which were choreographed by her. A skit on 'The Origin of Ramakrishna Order' directed by Mrs. Ambika Prasad was then presented by the Ananya Samarpana group. Swami Sridharananda thanked the artists, donors, volunteers and all the devotees for their support for Vedanta Centre. Everyone enjoyed the function as well as the draw. They congratulated the winners of prizes and had lunch *prasada*.

OVERSEAS VISITS:

Swami Sridharananda visited Auckland, Rotorua, Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch and Nelson of **New Zealand** from 5th July to 16th July 2007 and delivered talks on the Upanisad and other subjects. Swami Tadananda conducted Sunday classes in Sydney in his absence.

On invitation by the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Hong Kong, Swami Sridharananda visited **Hong Kong** from 5th of April to 10th of April 2007 and delivered talks on the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda. He also conducted classes on the Scriptures.

Visiting Monk:

Swami Atmaghanananda, Head of the Ramakrishna Mission, Colombo, Sri Lanka visited Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, and Perth. He gave talks at various

places in Sydney, Melbourne and other places which were attended

by a large number of devotees. Swami also rendered melodious *bhajans*.

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GOD IN EVERYTHING

Swami Vivekananda delivered the following lecture on **God in Everything** in London on 27th October 1896 based on the *Isavasya Upanishad*. The lecture was later published in Vol 2 of *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Swamiji very lucidly presented how Vedantic principles could be practiced in our everyday life without sacrificing the ideal.

Evil and way to escape from it

We have seen how the greater portion of our life must of necessity be filled with evils, however we may resist, and that this mass of evil is practically almost infinite for us. We have been struggling to remedy this since the beginning of time, yet everything remains very much the same. The more we discover remedies, the more we find ourselves beset by subtler evils. We have also seen that all religions propose a God, as the one way of escaping these difficulties. All religions tell us that if you take the world as it is, as the most practical people would advise us to do in this age, then nothing would be left to us but evil. They further assert that there is something beyond this world. This life in the five senses, life in the material world, is not all; it is only a small portion, and merely superficial. Behind and beyond is the Infinite in which there is no more evil. Some people call it God, some Allah, some Jehovah, Jove, and so on. The Vedantin calls It Brahman.

Remedy should not terminate life

The first impression we get of the advice given by religions is that we had better terminate our existence. To the question how to cure the evils of life, the answer apparently is, to give up life. It reminds one of the old story: A mosquito settled on the head of a man, and a friend, wishing to kill the mosquito, gave it such a blow that he killed both man and mosquito. The remedy of evil seems to suggest a similar course of action. Life is full of ills, the world is full of evils; that is a fact no one who is old enough to know the world can deny.

But what is the remedy proposed by all the religions? That this world is nothing. Beyond this world is

something which is very real. Here comes the difficulty. The remedy seems to destroy everything. How can that be a remedy? Is there no way out then? The Vedanta says that what all the religions advance is perfectly true, but it should be properly understood. Often it is misunderstood, because the religions are not very clear in their meaning.

Combination of head and heart

What we really want is head and heart combined. The heart is great indeed; it is through the heart that come the great inspirations of life. I would a hundred times rather have a little heart and no brain, than be all brains and no heart. Life is possible, progress is possible for him who has heart, but he who has no heart and only brains dies of dryness.

At the same time we know that he who is carried along by his heart alone has to undergo many ills, for now and then he is liable to tumble into pitfalls. The combination of heart and head is what we want. I do not mean that a man should compromise his heart for his brain or vice versa, but let everyone have an infinite amount of heart and feeling, and at the same time an infinite amount of reason. Is there any limit to what we want in this world? Is not the world infinite? There is room for an infinite amount of feeling, and so also for an infinite amount of culture and reason. Let them come together without limit, let them be running together, as it were, in parallel lines each with the other.

Carried away by the feeling

Most of the religions understand the fact, but the error into which they all seem to fall is the same; they are carried away by the heart, the feelings. There is evil in the world, give up the world; that is the great teaching, and the only teaching,

no doubt. Give up the world. There cannot be two opinions that to understand the truth everyone of us has to give up error. There cannot be two opinions that everyone of us in order to have good must give up evil; there can not be two opinions that everyone of us to have life must give up what is death. And yet, what remains to us, if this theory involves giving up the life of the senses, the life as we know it? And what else do we mean by life? If we give this up, what remains?

Deification of the world

We shall understand this better, when, later on, we come to the more philosophical portions of the Vedanta. But for the present I beg to state that in Vedanta alone we find a rational solution of the problem. Here I can only lay before you what the Vedanta seeks to teach, and that is the deification of the world. The Vedanta does not in reality denounce the world. The ideal of renunciation nowhere attains such a height as in the teachings of the Vedanta. But, at the same time, dry suicidal advice is not intended; it really means deification of the world -- giving up the world as we think of it, as we know it, as it appears to us -- and to know what it really is. Deify it; it is God alone. We read at the commencement of one of the oldest of the Upanishads, "Whatever exists in this universe is to be covered with the Lord."

Seeing God in everything

We have to cover everything with the Lord Himself, not by a false sort of optimism, not by blinding our eyes to the evil, but by really seeing God in everything. Thus we have to give up the world, and when the world is given up, what remains? God. What is meant? You can have your wife; it does not mean that you are to abandon her,

but that you are to see God in the wife. Give up your children; what does that mean? To turn them out of doors, as some human brutes do in every country? Certainly not. That is diabolism; it is not religion. But see God in your children. So, in everything. In life and in death, in happiness and in misery, the Lord is equally present. The whole world is full of the Lord. Open your eyes and see Him. This is what Vedanta teaches. Give up the world which you have conjectured, because your conjecture was based upon a very partial experience, upon very poor reasoning, and upon your own weakness.

Give it up; the world we have been thinking of so long, the world to which we have been clinging so long, is a false world of our own creation. Give that up; open your eyes and see that as such it never existed; it was a dream, Maya. What existed was the Lord Himself. It is He who is in the child, in the wife, and in the husband; it is He who is in the good and in the bad; He is in the sin and in the sinner; He is in life and in death.

A tremendous assertion indeed! Yet that is the theme which the Vedanta wants to demonstrate, to teach, and to preach. This is just the opening theme.

Desires make us miserable

Thus we avoid the dangers of life and its evils. Do not desire anything. What makes us miserable? The cause of all miseries from which we suffer is desire. You desire something and the desire is not fulfilled; the result is distress. If there is no desire, there is no suffering. But here, too, there is the danger of my being misunderstood. So it is necessary to explain what I mean by giving up desire and becoming free from all misery. The walls have no desire and they never suffer. True, but they never evolve. This chair has no desires, it never suffers; but it is always a chair. There is a glory in happiness, there is a glory in suffering. If I may dare to say so, there is a utility in evil

too. The great lesson in misery we all know. There are hundreds of things we have done in our lives which we wish we had never done, but which, at the same time, have been great teachers. As for me, I am glad I have done something good and many things bad; glad I have done something right, and glad I have committed many errors, because every one of them has been a great lesson. I, as I am now, am the resultant of all I have done, all I have thought. Every action and thought have had their effect, and these effects are the sum total of my progress.

Have no idea of proprietorship

We all understand that desires are wrong, but what is meant by giving up desires? How could life go on? It would be suicidal advice, killing the desire and the man too. The solution is this. Not that you should not have property, not that you should not have things which are necessary and things which are even luxuries. Have all that you want, and more, only know the truth and realise it. Wealth does not belong to anybody. Have no idea of proprietorship, possessorship. You are nobody, nor am I, nor anyone else. All belongs to the Lord, because the opening verse told us to put the Lord in everything. God is in the wealth that you enjoy. He is in the desire that rises in your mind. He is in the things you buy to satisfy your desire; He is in your beautiful attire, in your beautiful ornaments. This is the line of thought. All will be metamorphosed as soon as you begin to see things in that light. If you put God in your every movement, in your conversation, in your form, in everything, the whole scene changes, and the world, instead of appearing as one of woe and misery, will become a heaven.

Discover the heaven within

"The kingdom of heaven is within you," says Jesus; so says the Vedanta, and every great teacher. "He that hath eyes to see, let him see, and he that hath ears to hear,

let him hear." The Vedanta proves that the truth for which we have been searching all this time is present, and was all the time with us. In our ignorance, we thought we had lost it, and went about the world crying and weeping, struggling to find the truth, while all along it was dwelling in our own hearts. There alone can we find it.

He really works who is unselfish

If we understand the giving up of the world in its old, crude sense, then it would come to this: that we must not work, that we must be idle, sitting like lumps of earth, neither thinking nor doing anything, but must become fatalists, driven about by every circumstance, ordered about by the laws of nature, drifting from place to place. That would be the result. But that is not what is meant. We must work. Ordinary mankind, driven everywhere by false desire, what do they know of work? The man propelled by his own feelings and his own senses, what does he know about work? He works, who is not propelled by his own desires, by any selfishness whatsoever. He works, who has no ulterior motive in view. He works, who has nothing to gain from work.

Enjoy as an observer

Who enjoys the picture, the seller or the seer? The seller is busy with his accounts, computing what his gain will be, how much profit he will realise on the picture. His brain is full of that. He is looking at the hammer, and watching the bids. He is intent on hearing how fast the bids are rising. That man is enjoying the picture who has gone there without any intention of buying or selling. He looks at the picture and enjoys it. So this whole universe is a picture, and when these desires have vanished, men will enjoy the world, and then this buying and selling and these foolish ideas of possession will be ended. The money - lender gone, the buyer gone, the seller gone, this world remains the picture, a beautiful painting. I never read of any more beautiful conception of God than

the following: "He is the Great Poet, the Ancient Poet; the whole universe is His poem, coming in verses and rhymes and rhythms, written in infinite bliss." When we have given up desires, then alone shall we be able to read and enjoy this universe of God. Then everything will become deified. Nooks and corners, by - ways and shady places, which we thought dark and unholy, will be all deified. They will all reveal their true nature, and we shall smile at ourselves and think that all this weeping and crying has been but child's play, and we were only standing by, watching.

Deify and do you work

So do your work, says the Vedanta. It first advises us how to work -- by giving up the apparent, illusive world. What is meant by that? Seeing God everywhere. Thus do you work. Desire to live a hundred years, have all earthly desires, if you wish, only deify them, convert them into heaven. Have the desire to live a long life of helpfulness, of blissfulness and activity on this earth. Thus working, you will find the way out. There is no other way. If a man plunges headlong into foolish luxuries of the world without knowing the truth, he has missed his footing, he cannot reach the goal. And if a man curses the world, goes into a forest, mortifies his flesh, and kills himself little by little by starvation, makes his heart a barren waste, kills out all feelings, and becomes harsh, stern, and dried - up, that man also has missed the way. These are the two extremes, the two mistakes at either end. Both have lost the way, both have missed the goal.

Ignorance is demonical

So work, says the Vedanta, putting God in everything, and knowing Him to be in everything. Work incessantly, holding life as something deified, as God Himself, and knowing that this is all we have to do, this is all we should ask for. God is in everything, where else shall we go to find Him? He is already in every work, in every thought, in every

feeling. Thus knowing, we must work -- this is the only way, there is no other. Thus the effects of work will not bind us. We have seen how false desires are the cause of all the misery and evil we suffer, but when they are thus deified, purified, through God, they bring no evil, they bring no misery. Those who have not learnt this secret will have to live in a demoniacal world until they discover it. Many do not know what an infinite mine of bliss is in them, around them, everywhere; they have not yet discovered it. What is a demoniacal world? The Vedanta says, ignorance.

We are dying of thirst sitting on the banks of the mightiest river. We are dying of hunger sitting near heaps of food. Here is the blissful universe, yet we do not find it. We are in it all the time, and we are always mistaking it. Religion proposes to find this out for us.

All search for this state

The longing for this blissful universe is in all hearts. It has been the search of all nations, it is the one goal of religion, and this ideal is expressed in various languages in different religions. It is only the difference of language that makes all these apparent divergences. One expresses a thought in one way, another a little differently, yet perhaps each is meaning exactly what the other is expressing in a different language.

Perseverance leads us to conquest

More questions arise in connection with this. It is very easy to talk. From my childhood I have heard of seeing God everywhere and in everything, and then I can really enjoy the world, but as soon as I mix with the world, and get a few blows from it, the idea vanishes. I am walking in a street thinking that God is in every man, and a strong man comes along and gives me a push and I fall flat on the footpath. Then I rise up quickly with a clenched fist, and the blood has rushed to my head, and the reflection goes. Immediately I have become mad. Everything is forgotten;

instead of encountering God I see the devil. Ever since we were born we have been told to see God in all. Every religion teaches that -- see God in everything and everywhere. Do you not remember in the New Testament how Christ says so? We have all been taught that; but it is when we come to the practical side, that the difficulty begins. You all remember how in Aesop's Fables a fine stag is looking at his form reflected in a lake and is saying to his young one, "How powerful I am, look at my splendid head, look at my limbs, how strong and muscular they are; and how swiftly I can run." In the meantime he hears the barking of dogs in the distance, and immediately takes to his heels, and after he has run several miles, he comes back panting. The young one says, "You just told me how strong you were, how was it that when the dog barked, you ran away?" "Yes, my son; but when the dogs bark all my confidence vanishes." Such is the case with us. We think highly of humanity, we feel ourselves strong and valiant, we make grand resolves; but when the "dogs" of trial and temptation bark, we are like the stag in the fable. Then, if such is the case, what is the use of teaching all these things? There is the greatest use. The use is this, that perseverance will finally conquer. Nothing can be done in a day.

Have an ideal and cultivate it

"This Self is first to be heard, then to be thought upon, and then meditated upon." Everyone can see the sky, even the very worm crawling upon the earth sees the blue sky, but how very far away it is! So it is with our ideal. It is far away, no doubt, but at the same time, we know that we must have it. We must even have the highest ideal. Unfortunately in this life, the vast majority of persons are groping through this dark life without any ideal at all. If a man with an ideal makes a thousand mistakes, I am sure that the man without an ideal makes fifty thousand. Therefore, it is better to have an ideal. And this

ideal we must hear about as much as we can, till it enters into our hearts, into our brains, into our very veins, until it tingles in every drop of our blood and permeates every pore in our body. We must meditate upon it. "Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh," and out of the fullness of the heart the hand works too.

Struggle in spite of Failures

It is thought which is the propelling force in us. Fill the mind with the highest thoughts, hear them day after day, think them month after month. Never mind failures; they are quite natural, they are the beauty of life, these failures. What would life be without them? It would not be worth having if it were not for struggles. Where would be the poetry of life? Never mind the struggles, the mistakes. I never heard a cow tell a lie, but it is only a cow -- never a man. So never mind these failures, these little backslidings; hold the ideal a thousand times, and if you fail a thousand times, make the attempt once more. The ideal of man is to see God in everything. But if you cannot see Him in everything, see Him in one thing, in that thing which you like best, and then see Him in another. So on you can go. There is infinite life before the soul. Take your time and you will achieve your end.

Who see Oneness in everything has no misery

"He, the One, who vibrates more quickly than mind, who attains to more speed than mind can ever do, whom even the gods reach not, nor thought grasps, He moving, everything moves. In Him all exists. He is moving. He is also immovable. He is near and He is far. He is inside everything. He is outside everything, interpenetrating everything. Whoever sees in every being that same Atman, and whoever sees everything in that Atman, he never goes far from that Atman. When all life and the whole universe are seen in this Atman, then alone man has attained the secret. There is no

more delusion for him. Where is any more misery for him who sees this Oneness in the universe?"

Oneness in manifoldness

This is another great theme of the Vedanta, this Oneness of life, this Oneness of everything. We shall see how it demonstrates that all our misery comes through ignorance, and this ignorance is the idea of manifoldness, this separation between man and man, between nation and nation, between earth and moon, between moon and sun. Out of this idea of separation between atom and atom comes all misery. But the Vedanta says this separation does not exist, it is not real. It is merely apparent, on the surface. In the heart of things there is Unity still. If you go below the surface, you find that Unity between man and man, between races and races, high and low, rich and poor, gods and men, and men and animals. If you go deep enough, all will be seen as only variations of the One, and he who has attained to this conception of Oneness has no more delusion. What can delude him? He knows the reality of everything, the secret of everything. Where is there any more misery for him? What does he desire? He has traced the reality of everything to the Lord, the Centre, the Unity of everything, and that is Eternal Existence, Eternal Knowledge, Eternal Bliss. Neither death nor disease, nor sorrow, nor misery, nor discontent is there. All is Perfect Union and Perfect Bliss. For whom should he mourn then? In the Reality, there is no death, there is no misery; in the Reality, there is no one to mourn for, no one to be sorry for. He has penetrated everything, the Pure One, the Formless, the Bodiless, the Stainless. He is the Knower, He the Great Poet, the Self-existent, He who is giving to everyone what he deserves. They grope in darkness who worship this ignorant world, the world that is produced out of ignorance, thinking of it as Existence, and those who live their whole lives in this world, and never find anything better or

higher, are groping in still greater darkness. But he who knows the secret of nature, seeing That which is beyond nature through the help of nature, he crosses death, and through the help of That which is beyond nature, he enjoys Eternal Bliss. "Thou sun, who hast covered the Truth with thy golden disc, do thou remove the veil, so that I may see the Truth that is within thee. I have known the Truth that is within thee, I have known what is the real meaning of thy rays and thy glory and have seen That which shines in thee; the Truth in thee I see, and That which is within thee is within me, and I am That."

Hounds

The hounds of heaven
Bray at our heels,
Our fleeing binds the seven seals,
While we hide or while we play,
Ancient seconds tick away,
The reason we run, we can not say.

Some tell it's a dream,
Of time and motion,
And we and our world, Are but a notion.
If all time's turmoil,
And living's clutter,
Is as a dream, does it matter,
That our fretful searching is a bind,
Or lofty desires spur our kind?
So we live and so we die,
So we come and so we go;
The reason why, we do not know.

When much chastened, We cease to run,
The search for reasons is begun,
We turn, and befriend the hounds,
-The spheres keep their eternal
rounds,-
And eons on we yearn for God,
And doggedly Homewards plod,
Through biers of belief and fears,
Forests of doctrines, dogmas, ideas,
'Till bereft and naked come to be,
Free at last in Eternity.

Then in wonder it comes to mind;
That when God hides,
Who but God can find?

— Russell Frank Atkinson (Gurudas)

A devotee from Bellingen,
New South Wales, Australia.

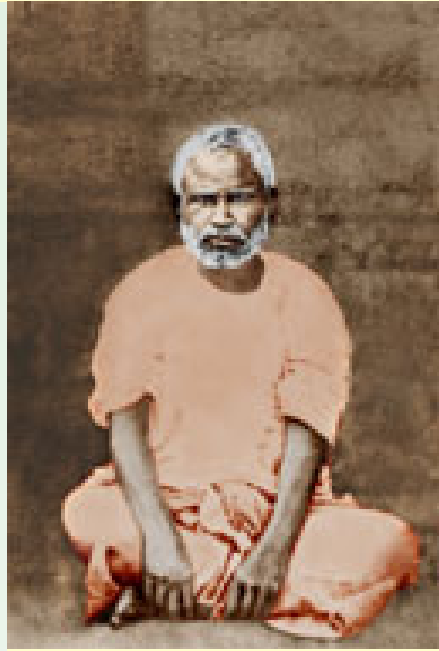
Divine Light Personified: Swami Adbhutananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna

The birth anniversary of the Swami was observed on 2 February 2007 in some of our centres.

Swami Adbhutananda, familiarly and affectionately known as Latu Maharaj, was a true mystic. Through the careful training and divine influence of his guru, Sri Ramakrishna, this unsophisticated village boy became an illumined saint. His brother disciple, Swami Vivekananda once said, “Latu is Ramakrishna’s greatest miracle. Having absolutely no education, he has attained the highest wisdom simply by virtue of Master’s (Sri Ramakrishna’s) touch.” Swami Turiyananda also said of him, “Many of us had to go through the muddy waters of intellectual knowledge before we attained God, but Latu jumped over them like Hanuman. His life teaches us how to live in God without touching the dirt of the world.”¹

Early life and first meeting with Sri Ramakrishna

Rakhturam – more usually known by Ramakrishna’s name for him, Latu – was the first to come to Sri Ramakrishna. He had been born of very poor parents in a village in Bihar, the state immediately north-west of Bengal. His parents died when he was a child and an uncle looked after him. This uncle was later obliged to leave the village and seek work in Calcutta. Latu went along with him and found employment as a houseboy. His employer – out of all the possible employers in Calcutta- was Ram Chandra Datta. At the time of Latu’s arrival, Ram Chandra had already become a devotee of Ramakrishna, so there was frequent talk of God in the household. Having heard Ram Chandra talk of Sri Ramakrishna, Latu was impatient to visit him. He soon found an opportunity to go to Dakshineswar. In Ramakrishna’s company he felt immediate joy. Latu soon became so devoted to Sri Ramakrishna that he could no longer work for Ram Chandra with



Swami Adbhutananda

(one who enjoys the bliss of the Atman that is wonderful.

his former zest; his only happiness was to be sent by Ram Chandra to Dakshineswar with gifts of sweet-meats for Sri Ramakrishna.²

In 1880, Sri Ramakrishna was away from Dakshineswar on what was to be his last visit to Kamarpukur. Latu was miserable. During Ramakrishna’s absence, he would sometimes go to Dakshineswar, but these visits only made him miss Sri Ramakrishna more. When Sri Ramakrishna returned from Kamarpukur, he felt the need of a personal attendant and asked Ram Chandra if he could have Latu. Ram Chandra agreed. So Latu became Ramakrishna’s servant, and this, in itself, was his whole spiritual life. To serve the Guru, to obey him literally and implicitly, was Latu’s way of finding God.

Because Sri Ramakrishna had once mildly reproved him for sleeping during the evening, saying, “If you sleep then, when will you meditate?”, Latu gave up sleeping at night altogether. Instead, he meditated at night, and took short naps only in the day time. He was quite unsophisticated and without education.

Sri Ramakrishna, who was very little of the scholar himself, tried to teach Latu to read, but Latu could never master the letters.³

Latu’s lack of formal education made him unique among Sri Ramakrishna’s direct disciples. Perhaps because his mind was uncluttered by intellectualism and not trained to doubt, he absorbed the instructions of his guru with unquestioning simplicity. Once the Master told him in an ecstatic mood, “One day the gems of the Vedas and Vedanta will pour forth from your lips.” Thus Latu was commissioned and blessed by his teacher. This prophecy later came to be fulfilled to the letter. It would seem as though Sri Ramakrishna intended to demonstrate to the modern world through Latu that God can be realised without the study of books and scriptures, that spiritual wisdom comes not through intellectualism but through inner realisation.⁴

With Sri Ramakrishna

At Dakshineswar, Latu began a life of rigorous spiritual discipline under the Master’s guidance, coupled

with continual service to him. There are many incidents illustrating his uncompromising directness and fervour both in serving the Master and in his spiritual struggles.

Sri Ramakrishna always stressed the necessity of harmonizing the various paths to God. At one time he told a group of disciples "Don't be one-sided. Our attitude towards the Lord must be symphonic in nature, made up of many instruments. It is a feast of many dishes." The Master took great pains to develop this ideal in the lives of his young disciples. He led them through the four yogas – the paths of discrimination, devotion, unselfish action, and meditation. At the same time he would select a particular yoga most suitable to the temperament of an individual disciple and recommend that path in order to awaken the disciple's spiritual energy. Sri Ramakrishna knew that Latu was of an emotional nature; therefore he encouraged him to take part in *kir-tan*, devotional singing.

Latu was extremely fortunate that he got the opportunity to live with Sri Ramakrishna and serve him for over six years.

The grace of the guru was Latu's only refuge. He did not read any books, but day and night he saw the blazing life of his Master and heard his teachings. Once he said: "I saw the Master in Samadhi many times, but one day I saw his beautiful unique form. His body complexion was changed, and his face radiated fearlessness and compassion. I shall never forget that form of the Master.

On 3rd August 1884 both Latu and Mahendra Nath Gupta (known as M) had the opportunity to see the Master's divine form, about which M. recorded later- "Presently the Master left them, going in the direction of the pine trees. After a few minutes M. and Latu, standing in the Panchavati, saw the Master coming back toward them. Behind him the sky was black with the rain-cloud. Its reflection in the Ganges made the water darker. The disciples felt that the Master was

God Incarnate, a Divine Child, five years old, radiant with the smile of innocence and purity..... The presence of this God-man charged the trees, shrubs, flowers, plants, and temples with spiritual fervour and divine joy."⁵

At Baranagore Monastery

As some disciples of the Master had already taken monastic vows, Vivekananda asked Latu also to take vows. Latu agreed at once. According to the custom, before the *sannyasa* ceremony, one performs one's own *shrāddha* ceremony (funeral rites), thus severing all ties with the world and ensuring liberation for one's family. During the *shrāddha* ceremony, Latu followed his own unconventional method. Instead of repeating the Sanskrit mantras, he simply evoked his departed ancestors in his own guileless way and offered food and other articles to them. After he became a sannyasin Latu Maharaj stayed at Baranagore Monastery for a year and a half.⁶

Days of Austerity

As prescribed in the Bhagavad-Gita Latu Maharaj surrendered himself to Sri Ramakrishna wholeheartedly. After the Master's passing away, he went through various kinds of sadhanas; he explained, "It is he (Sri Ramakrishna) who is taking me by the hand through all these disciplines." From 1886 to 1912 when he moved permanently to Varanasi, Latu Maharaj lived almost entirely in the Calcutta area, not far from the places that Sri Ramakrishna had stayed and often visited. Yet even in the city he lived the life of a wandering monk, unattached to people or places.

With his Brother Monks

Sri Ramakrishna bound his young disciples with love and they always loved one another. When Latu had pneumonia at Baranagore, his brother disciples nursed him like loving mothers. Latu Maharaj also took care of them in the similar manner.

He lived till 1920 and kept his Hindi accent and his childlike

disposition throughout his life. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that frankness is a virtue which enables one to realise God very easily; and Latu was certainly frank. In later years, when asked how he had had time for worship and meditation while he spent such long hours looking after Sri Ramakrishna, he would reply, "Service to the Master was our highest worship and meditation."

All the monastic disciples loved Latu. Naren (Swami Vivekananda) was particularly devoted to him and called him Latu-bhai (brother Latu). (Sometimes he used to call Latu as Leto and sometimes 'Pleto' after the Greek philosopher due to his witty answers). Latu called Naren 'Loren', not being able to pronounce his name correctly.⁷

In the thoughts of Guru

At the threshold of Latu's spiritual life, the Master had said to him (pointing to himself): "Here God alone exists. Do not forget this." "How can I forget someone who loves me so much?" answered Latu Maharaj. And he never forgot. Throughout his life, his mind was filled with the thoughts of Sri Ramakrishna and he would sometimes reveal to others the substance of these thoughts. Latu Maharaj completely fulfilled the name –"Adbhutananda," one who enjoys the wonderful bliss of Brahman.⁸

References:

1. *God Lived with Them* by Swami Chetanananda; page 394-5; p 393.
2. *Ramakrishna and his Disciples* by Christopher Isherwood; p 175.
3. *Disciples* page 176.
4. *God Lived ...* page 393-395.
5. *God Lived ...* page 400; 410.
6. *God Lived ...* page 415.
7. *Disciples ...* page 178.
8. *God Lived ...* page 420; page 438

The delay in bringing out this issue is regretted and hope to be regular in the future issues.