



REACH

News letter of VEDANTA CENTRES OF AUSTRALIA

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SAYINGS AND TEACHINGS

THE HOLY NAMES OF GOD PURIFY THE MIND

“By repeating a hundred times, ‘I am a sinner,’ one verily becomes a sinner. One should have such faith as to be able to say, ‘What? I have taken the name of God; how can I be a sinner?’ God is our Father and Mother. Tell Him, ‘O Lord, I have committed sins, but I won’t repeat them.’ Chant His name and purify your body and mind. Purify your tongue by singing God’s holy name.”

--- Sri Ramakrishna.

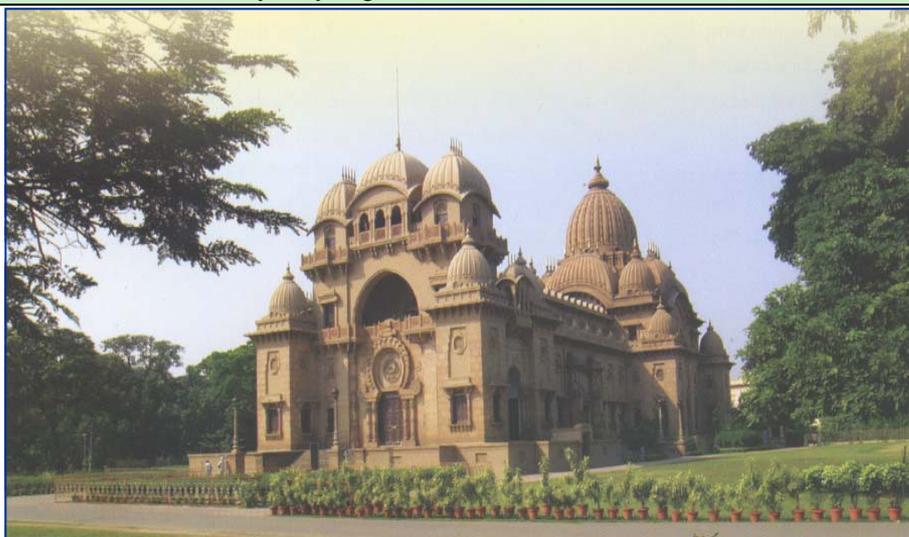
The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, by M, Ramakrishna Math Chennai, India. Page 159.

THE DIVINE GRACE LIFTS THE MIND

“It is the nature of water to flow downwards, but the sun’s rays lift it up towards the sky. Likewise it is the very nature of the mind to go to lower things, to objects of enjoyment, but the grace can make the mind go towards higher objects.”

--- Sri Sarada Devi.

Sri Sarada Devi, The Holy Mother: Life and Teachings by Swami Tapasyananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, India, Page 97.



Sri Ramakrishna Temple

At the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission at Belur Math, Howrah (West Bengal), India

CALENDER OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Birth Anniversary Celebration of	Centre	Date
Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi	Brisbane	8 December 2006
Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi	Melbourne	16 December 2006
Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi	Sydney	11 December 2006
Christmas Eve	Above Centres	24 December 2006

PURITY AND SINCERE LOVE FOR GOD IS THE REAL WORSHIP

“It is in love that religion exists and not in ceremony, in the pure and sincere love in the heart. Unless a man is pure in body and mind, his coming into a temple and worshipping Shiva is useless.”

--- Swami Vivekananda,

Lectures from Colombo to Almora, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Champawat, Himalayas, Page 45.

Welcome

We welcome all interested in the Ramakrishna—Vedanta Movement to join as members and render all support/help to propagate the universal message of Vedanta as depicted in the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda. All are invited to attend our programmes.

News and activities of Vedanta Centres of Australia and abroad

From May 2006 to October 2006

ADELAIDE CENTRE

Swami Sridharananda continued to visit Adelaide three days a month to deliver discourses on the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. The number of participants in these lectures has been increasing steadily. The talks of the Swami are being recorded for the devotees to help support their spiritual practices. The Adelaide Chapter of the Vedanta Centre was formally started on Saturday, the 17th of June 2006 with the election of a managing committee. For programme details please contact Mr. Raman/Shivani Sharma on: 08-8431 9775.

BRISBANE CENTRE

We are glad to inform devotees that the **Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre of Queensland** has purchased its own place at 181, Burbong Street, Chapel Hill, QLD 4073, Phone (07) 3279 2519 and got possession of the property on the 24th of July 2006. Swami Atmeshananda offered prayers and performed a simple worship of Sri Ramakrishna on the 17th of September 2006. A few devotees attended the informal function.

The Centre has a resident volunteer looking after the day-to-day activities at the Centre. Morning worship, evening *ārati*, *bhajans* and reading from *the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* serve as the basis of its regular activities. Swami Atmeshananda visited Brisbane every month generally from the first Saturday to Wednesday and conducted classes at the Centre and at other Brisbane locations. Swami Sridharananda, Swami Atmeshananda and Swami Chandrashekhara visited Brisbane from the 29th of June to the 2nd of July 2006 and attended its annual fund raising concert. Swami Sridharananda delivered an inspiring talk on the occasion.

CANBERRA CENTRE

Swami Sridharananda conducted classes in Canberra based on the *Mundaka Upanishad* and *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gītā* generally on the first weekend of every month at the Majura Community Centre. The centre observed its annual day on the 12th of August 2006 with a formal worship of Sri Ramakrishna and singing of *bhajan* etc. A large number of devotees attended the function. Swami Sridharananda delivered an inspiring talk on the occasion. All the Swamis of Sydney Centre attended the function including Swami Damodarananda. The contact phone number of 'Vedanta Centre of Sydney Canberra Chapter Inc' is (02) 6258 7612 (Mr. J. Venkatraman).

MELBOURNE CENTRE

1. Daily Activities:

The daily vesper service (*Arati*) continues to be held at the Centre in 7 Judy Court, Vermont, from 7-00 p.m. to 8-00 p.m. It consists of evening worship through Vedic chanting, hymns and scriptural readings. Optional participation includes devotional singing and meditation. The contact phone number is (03) 9387 4726). The bookshop, well-resourced with print, audio and visual on Ramakrishna - Vivekananda - Vedanta literatures, has been made available during this period.

2. Weekly and Monthly Activities:

The monthly discourses continued to be held on the *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita* delivered by Swami Sridharananda, President of the Vedanta Centre of Sydney and Melbourne, from Thursday to Saturday of a week on a monthly basis according to a fixed schedule. These discourses have been held at a public venue at Holmesglen TAFE during the period. The

lecture series were based on Karma Yoga being Chapter three of the *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita*. In February, a collection of the public discourses were made available in DVD format for devotees in order to support the ongoing study of the *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita*. The DVD collection is available for purchase.

Sunday Meetings have been scheduled for every second Sunday of each month from 5-00 p.m. to 7-30 p.m. It entails prayer, recitation of sacred mantras, rendering of *bhajans* as well as selected readings from relevant scriptures followed by related discussions. The meetings conclude with an *Arati* service and distribution of *Prasad*. The meetings have enjoyed the presence and support of a few new families during the period.

On Sunday the 3rd of September 2006 Swami Atmeshananda visited the Melbourne Centre to participate in a preparatory meeting regarding possible future hosting of a Parliament of Religions in Melbourne. A special *satsang* was held on Sunday evening. Chanting of sacred hymns and prayers, singing of *bhajans* and a talk by Swami Atmeshananda were some components of the programme which concluded with an offering of *Arati* and *prasad* distribution. Swami Chandrashekhara visited the Centre from the 4th of October to the 10th of October 2006. During the period, Japa - Meditation and chanting were organised daily in the morning hours from 6-30 a.m. to 8 a.m. and the reading from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and meditation were conducted after *Arati* in the evening. Three talks were given during the period on suitable subjects, one of which was in Hindi.

3. Other Activities

The **Annual General Meeting** of the Centre was held on the 15th of July 2006 at the Vedanta Centre in Judy Court commencing at 10-30 a.m.

PERTH CENTRE

The devotees as usual meet regularly, sing hymns, *bhajans* and read from 'The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'. A devotee has bequeathed a house for the activities of the Vedanta Centre in Perth. Swami Sridharananda visited the centre from the 14th of August to the 17th of August 2006 to organise the transfer and renovation work of the building which has recently been undertaken and the centre will be ready shortly to have a resident monk. He also gave a talk and met devotees.

SYDNEY CENTRE

1. Daily Activities:

The morning *puja*, meditation, and the evening vesper service followed by devotional singing form the main focus of the daily worshipful 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 Book stall making available Ramakrishna - Vivekananda and Vedanta literature for purchase.

2. Weekly and monthly Activities:

a) Swami Sridharananda conducted the following **classes** in Sydney based on a weekly programme:

The *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gitā* continued to be held every Sunday morning from 9.45 a.m. to 10.45 a.m. at the South Strathfield Bowling Club, Augusta Street, Strathfield. Swami Damodarananda conducted scriptural classes from the 27th of August to the 15th of October 2006 in the absence of Swami Sridharananda.

The *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* continued to be held every Wednesday evening from 7.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. at the Vedanta Centre, 85 Bland Street, Ashfield. The *Nārada Bhakti Sutras*

continued to be held on the second Monday of each month at 73 Francesco Crescent, Bella Vista, a suburb in the Hills district of Sydney.

b) Swami Atmeshananda conducted moral and spiritual education classes at the Vedanta Centre on Saturdays, when he taught children chanting, meditation and devotional singing.

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

d) Many devotees have availed themselves of counselling and guidance and have received much solace and comfort from the Swamis. The Swamis also visited the homes of devotees as and when required thus developing a close relationship between the Centre and the devotees.

e) Yoga classes restarted from the 17th of October after a brief period of suspension and being held on every Tuesday at the Centre at 7-30 p.m. The Yoga class for children has been withheld for the present.

f) **Career guidance** sessions were conducted on the second Saturday of every month from 3-30 p.m. to 6-30 p.m. Mr. Abhijit Guha, with his dedicated band of volunteers, continued to support new migrants to Australia helping them to find suitable jobs.

3. Puja and celebrations:

The **Guru Purnima** was celebrated on the 11th of July 2006. Swami Sridharananda gave an inspiring talk on the significance of Guru.

The Centre participated in the Indian Independence Celebrations on the 6th of August 2006 at the Sydney Olympic Ground by organizing a **book stall**. It also participated in the Multicultural festival held at the Ashfield Park on the 8th of October 2006.

The Sydney Centre celebrated **Sri Krishna Janmashtami** on the 15th of August 2006. A special evening worship of Lord Sri Krishna was performed followed by singing of *Bhajans* and chanting and concluded by distribution of *prasada*.

At the **Sri Ganesha Chaturthi Festival** organised by the Friends of India, Liverpool on the 28th of August 2006, Swami Damodarananda and Swami Chandrashekaranda addressed the gathering. Swami Damodarananda also gave an inspiring talk on the occasion.

The Centre conducted **Durga Puja** on the 30th of September 2006, the eighth day of Navaratri. A throng of devotees enjoyed the formal worship during the day and participated in the hymn – singing session in the evening after Aratrikam.

Swami Sridharananda accompanied by other Swamis participated in the **Deepavali Festival** organised by the Hindu community on the 24th of October 2006 at the Parliament of New South Wales. Swami Sridharananda addressed the audience on the theme '**As many Faiths so many Paths**'. The Premier of New South Wales Mr. Morris Iemma was the Guest of Honour at the festival.

4. Other Activities:

Dance Drama on the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi:

In collaboration with Ananya Samarpana Cultural group, the Centre staged a dance drama on 29th of July 2006 at the Hurstville Entertainment Centre. Councillor Nick Adams, Deputy Mayor of Ashfield Council was the Guest of Honour on the occasion. The play featured the life and teachings of Sri Sarada Devi the Holy Mother and aptly titled 'Jagat Janani Ma Sarada.' The 3-hour long play was directed by Mrs. Ambika Prasad and nearly 55 children and young adults acted in the drama. This was attended by about 500 people. Due

to popular demand the play was re-staged at the Bankstown Town Hall on the 4th of November 2006 which was witnessed by about 300 members of the audience.

OVERSEAS VISITS:

On invitation from the Vedanta Centre of Chicago and other centres of U.S.A. Swami Sridharananda visited United States of America from the 21st of August to 18th of October 2006 and delivered lectures based on the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda. He toured many Ramakrishna – Vedanta Centres in U.S.A and spoke at many places.



Sri Sri Durga Puja in progress



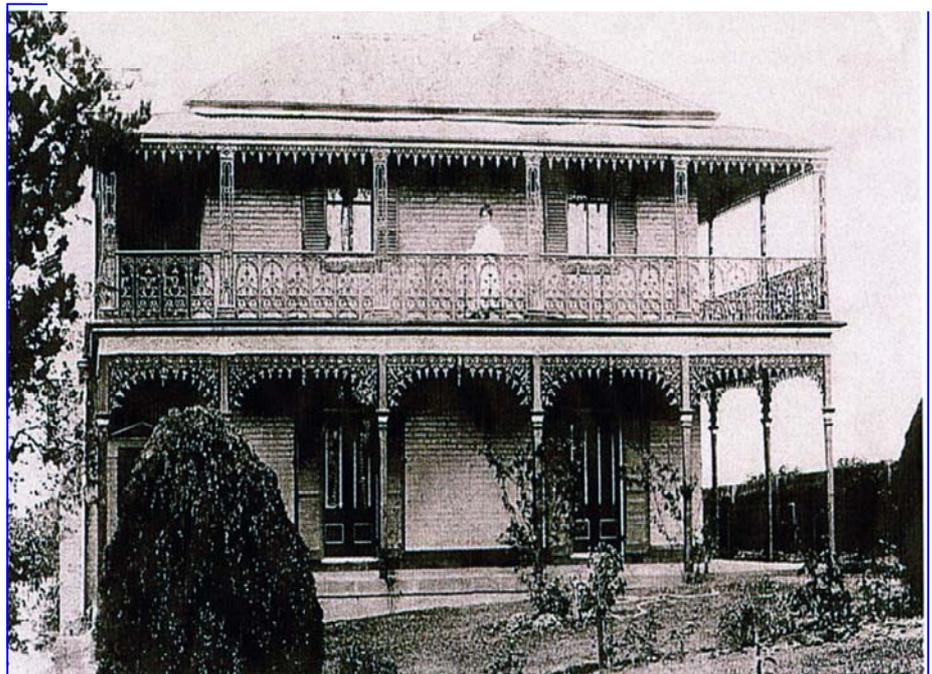
Sri Ramakrishna invoking the most propitious form of the Divine Mother in the person of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi during the course of Sodashi Puja

Prayers from Devi Mahatmyam

“ By you this universe is borne, by you this world is created. By you it is protected, O Devi! and you always consume it at the end. O you who are (always) of the form of the whole world, at the time of creation you are of the form of the creative force, at the time of sustentation you are of the form of the protective power, and at the time of dissolution of the world, you are of the form of the destructive power. You are the supreme knowledge as well as the great nescience, the great intellect and contemplation, as also the great delusion, the great devi as also the great asuri.”

Special News:

To accommodate its added activities Australia-wide and to make its permanent abode, the Vedanta Centre of Sydney was looking for a larger place for quite sometime. The Centre has recently procured a property at 2 Stewart Street, Ermington near Dundas and Eastwood, Sydney, overlooking the Paramatta Valley. The registration of the property was completed on the 31st of October 2006. It measures 3570 sq.metres and has a 125 years old two storied residence. Plans are ahead to renovate it and make it habitable and then to develop it to accommodate other activities of the Centre. **The donations towards the Building Fund are Tax-deductible and would be gratefully appreciated and acknowledged.**



Two storied residential building at acquired New Property

Feature Article:

BHAKTI - YOGA OR THE YOGA OF LOVE AND DEVOTION

Swami Vivekananda's mission of life was to propagate the lofty teachings of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, throughout the world, and to regenerate his Motherland in tune with her ancient tradition and inherent genius. He has left behind a rich legacy for the future generations – his writings on the four yogas, epistles, speeches, poetic compositions etc. in the form of *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Swamiji's thoughts on the Bhakti -Yoga have been derived from Volume Three of *the Complete Works*.

DEFINITION OF BHAKTI

Bhakti-Yoga is a real, genuine search after the Lord, a search beginning, continuing and ending in love. One single moment of the madness of extreme love to God brings us eternal freedom. "Bhakti," says Narada in his explanation of the Bhakti-aphorisms, "is intense love to God"; "When a man gets it, he loves all, hates none; he becomes satisfied for ever"; "This love cannot be reduced to any earthly benefit", because so long as worldly desires last, that kind of love does not come; "Bhakti is greater than Karma, greater than Yoga, because these are intended for an object in view, while Bhakti is its own fruition, its own means and its own end."

Bhakti has been the one constant theme of our sages...There is not really so much difference between knowledge (Jnana) and love (Bhakti) as people sometimes imagine. We shall see, as we go on, that in the end they converge and meet at the same point... The one great advantage of Bhakti is that it is the easiest and the most natural way to reach the great divine end in view; its great disadvantage is that in its lower forms it oftentimes degenerates into hideous fanaticism. The fanatical crew in (any) religion have always been almost exclusively recruited from these worshippers on the lower planes of Bhakti. That singleness of attachment (Nishtha) to a loved object, without which no genuine love can grow, is very often also the cause of the denunciation of everything else. All the weak and undeveloped minds in every religion or country have only one way of loving their own ideal, that is, by

hating every other ideal. Herein is the explanation of why the same man who is so lovingly attached to his own ideal of God, so devoted to his own ideal of religion, becomes a howling fanatic as soon as he sees or hears anything of any other ideal. This kind of love is somewhat like the canine instinct of guarding the master's property from intrusion; only, the instinct of the dog is better than the reason of man, for the dog never mistakes its master for an enemy in whatever dress he may come before it. Again, the fanatic loses all power of judgement... The same man who is kind, good, honest and loving to people of his own opinion, will not hesitate to do the vilest deeds when they are directed against persons beyond the pale of his own religious brotherhood.

But this danger exists only in that stage of Bhakti which is called the *preparatory* (Gauni) When Bhakti has become ripe and has passed into that form which is called the *supreme* (Para), no more is there any fear of these hideous manifestations of fanaticism; that soul which is overpowered by this higher form of Bhakti is too near the God of Love to become an instrument for the diffusion of hatred.

It is not given to all of us to be harmonious in the building up of our characters in this life; yet we know that that character is of the noblest type in which all these three - knowledge and love and Yoga - are harmoniously fused. Three things are necessary for a bird to fly - the two wings and the tail as a rudder for steering. Jnana (Knowledge) is the one wing, Bhakti (Love) is the other, and

Yoga is the tail that keeps up the balance. For those who cannot pursue all these three forms of worship together in harmony and take up, therefore, Bhakti alone as their way, it is necessary always to remember that forms and ceremonials, though absolutely necessary for the progressive soul, have no other value than taking us on to that state in which we feel the most intense love to God.

There is a little difference in opinion between the teachers of knowledge and those of love, though both admit the power of Bhakti. The Jnanis hold Bhakti to be an instrument of liberation, the Bhaktas look upon it both as the instrument and the thing to be attained. To my mind this is a distinction without much difference. In fact, Bhakti, when used as an instrument, really means a lower form of worship, and the higher form becomes inseparable from the lower form of realisation at a later stage. Each seems to lay a great stress upon his own peculiar method of worship, forgetting that with perfect love true knowledge is bound to come even unsought, and that from perfect knowledge true love is inseparable.

Bearing this in mind let us try to understand what the great Vedantic commentators have to say on the subject. In explaining the Sutra *Avrittirasakridupadeshat* (Meditation is necessary, that having been often enjoined) Bhagavan Shankara says, "Thus people say, 'He is devoted to the king, he is devoted to the Guru'; they say this of him who follows the Guru, and does so, having that following as the one end in view. Similarly they

say, 'The loving wife meditates on her loving husband'; here also a kind of eager and continuous remembrance is meant." This is devotion according to Shankara.

Meditation again is a constant remembrance (of the thing meditated upon) flowing like an unbroken stream of oil poured out from one vessel to another. When this kind of remembering has been attained (in relation to God) all bondage break. Thus it is spoken of in the scriptures regarding constant remembering as a means to liberation. This remembering again is of the same form as seeing, because it is of the same meaning as in the passage, '**When He who is far and near is seen, the bonds of the heart are broken, all doubts vanish, and all effects of work disappear.**' He who is near can be seen, but he who is far can only be remembered. Nevertheless the scripture says that we have to see Him who is near as well as Him who is far, thereby indicating to us that the above kind of remembering is as good as seeing. This remembrance when exalted assumes the same form as seeing...

Worship is constant remembering as may be seen from the essential texts of scriptures. Knowing, which is the same as repeated worship, has been described as constant remembering.... Thus the memory, which has attained to the height of what is as good as direct perception, is spoken of in the Shruti as a means of liberation. '**This Atman is not to be reached through various sciences, nor by intellect, nor by much study of the Vedas. Whomsoever this Atman desires, by him is the Atman attained, unto him this Atman discovers Himself.**' Here, after saying that mere hearing, thinking and meditating are not the means of attaining Atman, it is said, '**Whom this Atman desires, by him the Atman is attained.**' The extremely beloved is desired; by whomsoever this Atman is extremely beloved, he becomes the most beloved of the Atman. So that

this beloved may attain the Atman, the Lord Himself helps. For it has been said by the Lord: '**Those who are constantly attached to Me and worship Me with love - I give that direction to their will by which they come to Me.**' Therefore it is said that, to whomsoever this remembering, which is of the same form as direct perception, is very dear, because it is dear to the Object of such memory perception, he is desired by the Supreme Atman, by him the Supreme Atman is attained. This constant remembrance is denoted by the word Bhakti. So says Bhagavan Ramanuja in his commentary on the Sutra **Athato Brahma-jijnasa** (Hence follows a dissertation on Brahman).

In commenting on the Sutra of Patanjali, **Ishvara pranidhanadva**, that is, "Or by worship of the Supreme Lord" - Bhoja says, '**Pranidhana** is that sort of Bhakti in which, without seeking results, such as sense-enjoyments etc, all works are dedicated to that Teacher of teachers.' Bhagavan Vyasa also, when commenting on the same defines **Pranidhana** as "the form of Bhakti by which the mercy of the Supreme Lord comes to the Yogi, and blesses him by granting him his desires". According to Shandilya, "Bhakti is intense love to God." The best definition is, however, that given by the king of Bhaktas, Prahlada: "That deathless love which the ignorant have for the fleeting objects of their senses - as I keep meditating on Thee - may not that love slip away from my heart!" **Love!** For whom? For the Supreme Lord Ishvara. Love for any other being, however great cannot be Bhakti: for, as Ramanuja says in his Shri Bhasya, quoting an ancient great teacher: "**From Brahma to a clump of grass, all things that live in the world are slaves of birth and death caused by Karma; therefore they can not be helpful as objects of meditation, because they are all in ignorance and subject to change.**"

In commenting on the word *anurakti* used by Shandilya, the commentator Svapnesvara says that it means **Anu**, after, and **Rakti**, attachment; that is, the attachment which comes after the knowledge of the nature and glory of God; else a blind attachment to any one, e.g. to wife or children, would be Bhakti. We plainly see, therefore, that Bhakti is a series or succession of mental efforts at religious realisation beginning with ordinary worship and ending in a supreme intensity of love for Ishvara.

Source: *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*; Mayavati Memorial Edition; Volume III; pages 31-6; Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta.



Bhakti According to Sri Ramakrishna

"Bhakti is single-minded devotion to God, like the devotion a wife feels for her husband. It is very difficult to have unalloyed devotion to God. Through such devotion one's mind and soul merges in Him.

God cannot remain unmoved if you have raga-bhakti, that is, love of God with passionate attachment to Him. Do you know how fond God is of His devotees' love? It is like the cow's fondness for fodder mixed with oil-cake. The cow gobbles it down greedily.

Pure knowledge and pure love are one and the same thing. Both lead the aspirants to the same goal. The path of love is much easier."

- - - Sri Ramakrishna

Light Personified : Swami Saradananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna

The birthday of Swami Saradananda falls on Tuesday, the 26th of December 2006 this year.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Sarat Chandra Chakravarty (Swami Saradananda) first came to Dakshineswar with his cousin, Shashi Bhushan Chakravarty (later known as Ramakrishnananda) in October 1883, when they were eighteen and twenty years old respectively. Both were highly intelligent. Sarat's father owned a pharmacy and therefore wanted his son to become a doctor. Sarat was willing to do this, especially when Naren (Vivekananda) approved of the plan, and he entered the Calcutta Medical College. But when Ramakrishna became fatally ill, Sarat at once abandoned his medical studies in order to nurse his Master. He never returned to them; for he became a monk. Throughout the rest of his life, however, he showed a vocation for nursing the sick.

Sarat was noted for his courage and imperturbable calm, the calm of the true yogi, which he displayed in the midst of various dangers. On one occasion, Saradananda was coming up the Ganges by boat with one of the devotees when a violent storm arose. The boat seemed likely to sink, but the Swami never stopped puffing away at his hookah. His aplomb irritated the nervous devotee so much that he finally seized they pipe and threw it into the water.

In 1893, Vivekananda went for the first time to the United States and spent more than three years there and in Europe lecturing. In 1896, he wrote asking Saradananda to come to the West and carry on his work. The two met in London, where Saradananda had been giving some



Swami Saradananda

lectures. Then Vivekananda left for India and Saradananda sailed for New York, where he remained, as the head of the Vedanta Society, until his return to India in 1898. He later became the first secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission and held this office until his death in 1927.

Among Saradananda's many duties was the direction of a magazine called the *Udbodhan* (Awakening), which had been founded by Vivekananda. In 1908, he decided to build a house which would serve both as an office for the magazine and a home for the Holy Mother. It was to pay off the debts incurred in building this house that Saradananda began to write the articles which formed his book *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lila-prasanga* in Bengali (*Ramakrishna the Great Master or Sri Ramakrishna and His Divine Play* in English). It was typical of him that he demanded no special privacy for himself while he was engage in this enormous task. Sitting cross-legged at a low desk in a tiny room, with the chatter of visitors all around him, he worked

away with perfect concentration, breaking off, whenever necessary, to attend to some administrative detail.

AS A SPIRITUAL TEACHER

To Saradananda, **work was worship**. Once he said, "All through my life I worked, envisioning the faces of the Master and Swamiji. I had no time to pay any attention to others' opinions." His health began to fail, partly from overwork and partly from taking on the bad karma of his disciples. Some monks asked him to refrain from giving initiation. The swami replied, "Do not say that. I consider myself blessed that people come to me to hear the Lord's name. It is not they but I who have to be thankful for this. I am fortunate indeed that I have been given the privilege of telling them of the Lord."

The mark of a real teacher is that he is completely truthful. Whatever that person says, he does. Once when a young monk was going to Belur Math from Calcutta, Saradananda told him to inform Premenanda that he would visit the

monastery in the afternoon. A terrible thunderstorm arose in the afternoon. When it stopped, the swami left for Belur, crossing the Ganges by ferry and then walking a few miles. He arrived in the monastery after Premananda had finished his supper and was relaxing on the veranda. "Is there any emergency today that you have to come to Belur in this bad weather?" asked Premananda. "No," replied Saradananda, "but I sent word to you in the morning that I would be in the monastery, so I have come." Premananda remarked, "Like guru like disciple. If any word would come from the lips of the Master, he always kept it."

Doubt is a horrible disease of the human mind. An illumined teacher always tries to remove the doubts of his disciples. In 1925 two young scientists came to Calcutta to visit Saradananda at Udbodhan. One of them asked, "Does God exist?" "Yes," replied the swami. The proof according to his explanation was in the words of the rishis (seers of truth) for after experiencing God they proclaimed that God exists. One of the scientists responded that he won't believe without experiencing god himself. The swami replied, "Suppose you have never been to England? You will have to know about England from those who have visited it. Although you have not seen it, you can't deny the existence of England. Likewise God exists; you will need to trust the judgement of those who have seen Him."

According to the swami **through selfless work the mind gets purified.** And when the mind becomes pure, knowledge and devotion arise in it. Knowledge is the very nature of the Self, but being covered with ignorance, it is not manifest. The object of selfless work is to remove this covering. As a matter of fact, knowledge dawns as soon as the mind becomes pure. In the Mahabharata there is the story of the chaste woman who attained knowledge by serving her husband

and by performing her other household duties.

A disciple once said to the swami that the **spiritual practices sometimes seem mechanical.** The swami replied that if the same routine is followed every day it is only natural to feel so sometimes. But on those days when one likes any particular portion of the sadhana, then one should devote oneself to that and let the other parts go. In this way one may be neglecting particular practices for three or four days at a stretch. But that did not matter. When these practices are renewed then one will find delight in them. Of course one is much benefited by **regular practice. If one practises regularly for some time every day, one gains strength and finds pleasure in spiritual practices. To find joy in anything the brain and the heart must unite.** Through mere intellectualism one does not get joy. Everything becomes lifeless.

One swami posed a question, "What does 'make the thought tally with speech' mean?" The swami replied that **one must be sincere, that one's inner life should tally with the outer.** He said, "Do you think it is so easy? We chant the name of the Lord very superficially. We say, O Lord, I am Your servant and You are my Master;..... Lord please grant me Your vision.' And at the same time we are harbouring bad thoughts in the mind. It does not work. As you speak, so you must think."

A question was asked to the swami, "Swami, we do not see God. How can we love Him without seeing him? How can we love a Being who is unseen and whose very existence is doubtful?" The swami responded thus, "**Act according to the instructions of the guru.** If you can strictly follow what the guru has prescribed for the realisation of God, everything will be smooth at last. Meditation comes afterwards. If one fails to meditate one should go

on repeating the mantram very earnestly. ...The repetition of the mantram in a proper spirit even once purifies the mind. Instantly the mind fills with delight and becomes blissful." As to the meaning of mantram of the questioner the swami said, "'May God, who is the creator, sustainer and dissolver of the universe, remove my sorrows.' This is the significance of all mantras. Have faith in God; otherwise even thousands of explanations will be of no use. Pray to Him and love Him."

Conclusion

Saradananda is a glowing example of a person who could keep his mind in God, or the Self, and at the same time his hands in work. Life inspires life. Swami Saradananda led a pure life, serene, dedicated and harmonious life, a source of inspiration for future generations. Swami Nikhilananda wrote in his reminiscences, "Whenever I think of Swami Saradananda I remember the following verse in the Bhagavad Gita: 'Not the desirer of desires attains peace, but he whom all desires enter as the waters enter the ocean, which is full to the brim and grounded in stillness.'

Sources:

1. *Ramakrishna And His Disciples* by Christopher Isherwood; pp 224-225. Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta.
2. *God Lived With Them: Life Stories of Sixteen Monastic Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna* by Swami Chetanananda; pp 344-349; Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta

*"Sharat is the jewel of my head.
What he says will be done."*

Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi