



REACH

Newsletter of the Vedanta Centres of Australia

Motto:

*Atmano mokshartham
jagad hitaya cha,*

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

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Sayings and Teachings

Jiva is Shiva

“Jiva is Shiva (all living beings are God). Who then dare talk of showing mercy to them? Not mercy, but service, service. For man must be regarded as God.”

--- Sri Ramakrishna

Great Sayings—Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda, The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Kolkata, page 16.

Ecstatic Love (*Prema Bhakti*)

“He who has really prayed to the Master, even once, has nothing to fear. By praying to Him constantly one gets ecstatic love (*Prema Bhakti*) through His grace. This Prema, my child, is the innermost thing of spiritual life. The Gopis of Vrindaban attained to it. They were not aware of anything in the world excepting Sri Krishna. A line in one of Nilakantha’s songs says, ‘One should cherish with great care this precious jewel of Prema’.”

--- Sri Sarada Devi

Teachings of Sri Sarada Devi: The Holy Mother, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, page 15.

Duty

“Our first duty is not to hate ourselves; because to advance we must have faith in ourselves first and then in God. He who has no faith in himself can never have faith in God.”

“You should cultivate a noble nature by doing your duty. By doing our duty we get rid of the idea of duty; and then and then only we feel everything as done by God. We are but machines in His hand.”

--- Swami Vivekananda

Teachings of Swami Vivekananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, page 45.



Vedanta Centre of Sydney, 2 Stewart Street, Ermington, NSW 2115.

FORTHCOMING CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Function	Centre	Date
Guru Purnima	Sydney	Monday, 22 July 2013
Krishna Janmastami	Sydney	Wednesday, 28 August 2013
150th Birth Anniversary Celebration of Swami Vivekananda	Adelaide	Saturday, 21 September 2013
	Brisbane	Friday, 6 September 2013
	Canberra	Sunday, 16 June 2013
	Melbourne	Friday, 13 September 2013
	Perth	Sunday, 22 September 2013
	Sydney	Monday, 16 September 2013
	Auckland, NZ	Saturday, 31 August 2013
Play: Oneness—Voice without a form	Townsville	Sat. & Sunday, 7 & 8 Sept. 2013
	Brisbane	Monday, 21 September 2013
	Sydney	Tues, Wed-day, 17, 18 Sept. 2013
Video Show	Sydney	TBA
Durga Puja	Sydney	Saturday, 12 October 2013

Welcome

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

News from and activities of the Vedanta Centres of Australia and New Zealand for the period from January 2013 to April 2013.

ADELAIDE CENTRE

Monthly activities:

a) Swami Sridharananda continued his three-days-a-month visit and delivered discourses on the *Srimad-Bhagavad Gītā* and *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* at the Dulwich Community Centre, 14 Union Street, Dulwich SA 5065. A dedicated group of devotees attend his talks. These talks have also been recorded. For details of the programmes organized by the Adelaide Chapter please contact Dr. Raman Sharma on 08 - 8431 9775 or Mrs. Pathma Iswaran on 08-8379 5336.

b) Every month on prescheduled Sundays the '**Reading** from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*' including discussion on relevant points was conducted at devotees' homes .

Celebrations:

a) The birth anniversary of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi was celebrated on Sunday, the 13th of January 2013 at 10 a.m. at 33 Woodhouse Crescent, Wattle Park SA 5066. It included chanting, *bhajans*, reading from the Gospel of the Holy Mother and *pushpanjali*.

b) The birth anniversary of Swami

Vivekananda was celebrated on Sunday, the 3rd of February 2013 at 9:30 a.m. at 77 Marion Road, Ascot Park, SA 5043. It included chanting, *bhajans*, reading from the Gospel of the Holy Mother and *pushpanjali*.

c) The Annual Celebration of the Adelaide Chapter was held on Saturday April 6, 2013 at the Dulwich Community Centre from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. A group of devotees sang *bhajans* while Swami Chandrashekhara performed the traditional worship. Swami Sridharananda spoke on *The Life and Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*. Many devotees participated in the function and later enjoyed the *prasada*.

BRISBANE CENTRE

Daily activities:

Morning worship, evening *ārati*, *bhajans*, and readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* are the daily activities of the Centre at **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.

Monthly Activities:

The following programmes were

conducted at the Centre -

a) Scripture **classes** at the Centre on the first Saturday and Sunday, and second Friday and Sunday of every month.

b) Prayer **meetings** on the first Friday of the month in Deception Bay, QLD. A talk on Friday, the 5th of March was given by Swami Sunishthananda.

c) **Discussion** groups on the first Monday and Tuesday of every month in Sunnybank Hills, QLD.

d) A **class** on the first Wednesday of every month at Springfield, QLD.

Celebrations:

a) The Kalpataru day and the birth anniversary of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi were observed at the Indooroopilly Senior Citizens' Club Hall on the 1st of January 2013. *Bhajans* were sung by devotees and Swami Atmeshananda delivered a talk on the significance of Sri Ramakrishna becoming the Kalpataru. Mrs. Vickey Sundaram and Miss Debapama Basu spoke on the life and teachings of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi. Devotees participated in the formal worship.

b) The birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna were observed on Saturday, 9th of March 2013. The programme consisted of formal worship, vocal and instrumental music and a Multifaith Conference at the auditorium of the Ironside State School, St. Lucia, Brisbane. The programme began at 10.30 a.m. with a formal worship performed by Swami Sunishthananda. After singing a few devotional songs an inspiring speech was delivered by Dr. Maha Sinnathamby. Representatives of Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and Sufi Tradition were invited to take part in a multi-faith conference. Dr. Ashim Majumdar, Vice President, Brisbane chapter of the Vedanta Centre, welcomed all the speakers and the audience. The representatives spoke on the salient points of their respective religions. Some of them spoke on the significance of Swami Vivekananda's universal approach. Swami Sridharananda, who presided



Adelaide Centre—Annual Day function.



Brisbane Centre—Multifaith Conference.

over the meeting, gave an inspiring speech wherein he dwelt upon the various aspects of the concept of a universal religion as propounded by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Dr. Prasad Yarlagadda delivered the vote of thanks. The event concluded with *aratrikam* and a sumptuous lunch. Nearly 200 persons participated in the event.

CANBERRA CENTRE

Swami Sridharananda conducted classes on the *Bhagavad-Gitā* twice a month at the Belconnen Community Centre, 2 Chandler Street in Canberra. Contact person: Mr. J. Venkataraman, Secretary on 02-6258 7612.

MELBOURNE CENTRE

Daily Activities:

Vesper service is held daily from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the Centre at **5-7 Angus Avenue, Ringwood, Vic 3135**. It includes set hymns, scriptural readings, meditation and occasional devotional singing. **Contact persons:** Mr. Suresh Ravinutala, Secretary - 03-9803 6154, Mr. Mohana Krishnan on 03-9801 6174.

The **bookstall** holds literature on the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, Vedanta philosophy, and other spiritual topics in print, audio, and visual media.

Weekly/Monthly Activities:

a) Swami Sridharananda continued to deliver monthly **discourses** on the *Bhagavad-Gitā* from the Thursday to the Saturday of a prescheduled week at Monash University Clayton Campus of Law, Wellington Road (L. Theatre L4). The Thursday and Friday sessions were held from 7:45 p.m. to 9 p.m. and on Saturdays the sessions were held from 10 a.m. to 11

a.m. Classes were conducted at the Centre on 26th and 27th of April 2013. The recordings of these discourses are available in Audio, Video and MP3 formats.

b) **Group studies** through the viewing of (i) the *Mundaka Upanishad* lecture series on video was held every Sunday from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. and (ii) The *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* lecture series on video is held every Friday from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. (iii) The *Bhagavad-Gitā* study group meets on alternate Sundays from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Other activities:

a) **Kalpataru day** was observed on the 1st of January 2013.

b) The birth anniversary of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi was celebrated on the 12th of January 2013 from 8:30 a.m. till 12:30 p.m. An elaborate worship was performed on the occasion amidst singing of *bhajans*. Swami Sridharananda gave a talk on the life and teachings of Holy Mother. Swami Chandrashekharananda visited the Centre from 11th to 13th of January and officiated the worship.

c) The birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda was celebrated on 9th of February 2013 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and concluded with the distribution of *prasad*. A special worship was offered

on the occasion amidst the singing of *bhajans*. Br. Harshal offered the worship. Swami Atmeshananda gave a talk on the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda.

d) The birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated on 23rd of March 2013. A special worship was offered on the occasion amidst the singing of *bhajans*. Swami Sridharananda gave a talk on the Avatarvad of Sri Ramakrishna. Br. Shiva offered the worship assisted by Br. Sree. The function concluded with *prasad* distribution.

e) **Ramanavami** was celebrated on Saturday the 20th of April 2013 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The programme included the singing of *bhajans*, readings, offerings of flowers and *ārati* followed by *prasad* distribution.

Special Programme:

The Vedanta Centre in collaboration with FIAV (Federation of Indian Association) organised an 'open-house' of the Centre from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Local councillors from Maroondah and Whitehorse councils, Representatives of various Indian associations and local media attended the function. The neighbours too were invited. The meeting gave the Vedanta Centre an opportunity to showcase the Ramakrishna-Vedanta Movement and its activities to all present. Swami Sridharananda welcomed the guests and a short documentary on the Ramakrishna Movement was shown to them. A select few spoke on the occasion. The councillors and other attendees expressed their happiness and delight at this opportunity to visit the Centre and enhance their understanding of the Vedanta activities in Australia.



Melbourne Centre— Birth Anniversaries of Holy Mother and Sri Ramakrishna.

The meeting concluded with light refreshment and a walk around the Centre.

PERTH CENTRE

Daily Activities:

The Centre located at **51 Golf View Street, Yokine W.A. 6060** holds vesper service daily at 7 p.m. with *ārati*, readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and meditation. The Centre maintains a small bookstall and a library. Contact persons: Mr. Hiren Mukhopadhyay, Secretary - 0411 478 244 and Mr. Parthiv Parekh, Asstt. Secretary - 0430 511 699.

Monthly Activities:

The following monthly activities were held:

a) Swami Sridharananda visited the Centre from the Wednesday to the Saturday of a prescheduled week every month and conducted discourses on *Bhagavad Gitā*.

b) Monthly *satsangs* including the singing of *bhajans* and readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and other inspiring books were conducted on the first Sunday of every month from 11 a.m.

c) A **Revision** session through playing the audio recording on *Bhagavat Gitā* talks that were delivered in the previous month.

Celebrations:

a) The birth anniversary of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi was observed on the 4th of January. The highlights of the celebrations at the Sydney Centre, and the talk given by Swami Sridharananda there were relayed at the Centre.

b) The birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda was observed on the 3rd of February. The highlights of the celebrations at the Sydney Centre and the talk given by Swami Sridharananda were relayed at the Centre. Swami Chandrashekharananda visited the Centre from the 4th to the 14th of February 2013 and conducted *satsanga*, talks on Swami Vivekananda and a meditation session.

c) The birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated on the 17th of March. Swami Chandrashekharananda conducted the elaborate worship. Swami Sunishthananda and other devotees sang *bhajans* during the worship. After the worship both the swamis delivered talks on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. Daily *satsanga* and *bhajans* were sung during their visit from the 15th to the 18th of March 2013.

SYDNEY CENTRE

Daily Activities:

Daily worship including chanting and meditation is held every morning from 6:45 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. at 2 Stewart Street, Ermington. The vesper service starts in the evening at 7 p.m. and this includes devotional singing, a reading from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and meditation.

Counselling, interviews and discussions with devotees are also conducted on a daily basis. The library is available to devotees for reference and research. The Centre maintains a **bookstall** which has a range of books on the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, Vedanta, Yoga, and other spiritual literature.

Devotional songs, discourses on the *Bhagavad Gitā*, the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, *Mundaka Upanisad*, and other topics are also available in various media.

Weekly/ Monthly Activities:

The Centre conducted the following activities in Sydney:

a) Swami Sridharananda conducted **classes** on the *Bhagavad-Gitā* every Sunday morning from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Centre.

b) **Classes** on *Bhagavad Gitā* were also conducted by Swami Sridharananda at 1/11 Boyle Street, Balgowlah, NSW 2093 **Manly Beach** on Tuesdays from 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

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

d) **Meditation** sessions were held at the Centre on Sundays from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m.

e) **Sanskrit language** classes were held on Saturdays and Sundays for adult students at varying levels.

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

g) On an average 30 children participated in the three-day long **holiday camp** conducted at the Centre from the 16th to 18th of April 2013.

h) Classes on **moral and spiritual lessons** were also conducted for children at Eastwood Public School on Wednesdays from 9:45 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. during the academic term.



Perth Centre— Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna.



Sydney Centre— Birth Anniversary of Holy Mother.

i) The Centre provided **English Language tutoring** on Tuesdays from 5:30 p.m. to 6:45 p.m. during the school term.

j) **Rāmanām Sankirtana** was sung on *Ekadashi* days after the vesper service.

k) A **class** for ladies on *Meditation and Spiritual Life* was conducted on two select Mondays in a month from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

l) Swami Chandrashekharananda attended the Saraswati Puja organised by the Bangla Desh Puja Association as the Chief Guest on 13th of February 2013 and gave a talk on the significance of the worship of Mother Saraswati.

m) Swami Chandrashekharananda attended the inauguration function of the Vedic and Cultural Centre of Australia, Greystanes, Sydney as the Guest of Honour on the 24th of March 2013 and gave a talk on the occasion.

n) A one day **Spiritual Retreat** was organized at the Centre on the 1st of April 2013. About 37 devotees participated in it.

o) Swami Atmeshananda attended a

concert organized by Abhaya Karam as the Guest of Honour on 20th April 2013.

p) Swami Atmeshananda and Swami Sunishthananda attended the Youth Camp organized by HSS group at the Bahai Retreat Centre on the 25th of April 2013 and spoke about the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda.

q) To commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda a **Study Group** was started on 7th of April 2013 to study the teachings of Swami Vivekananda and spread them in the community. Its meeting is held on Sundays from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

Celebrations:

a) The **Kalpataru** day was observed on the 1st of January 2013.

b) The **birth anniversary of Holy Mother** Sri Sarada Devi was celebrated on Friday, the 4th of January 2013. Amidst the chanting of mantras and bhajans a special worship was offered to the Holy Mother. Swami Sridharananda gave a talk on the life and teachings of the Holy Mother after evening *ārati*.

c) The **birth anniversary of Swami**

Vivekananda according to the Gregorian Calendar was observed by singing *bhajans* and violin recital on the 12th of January 2013 by a group of young artists.

d) The **birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda** as per the Hindu Lunar Calendar was observed on Thursday, the 3rd of February 2013. A special worship was offered to the Holy Trio amidst the chanting of mantras and *bhajans*. Swami Sridharananda gave a talk on the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda after evening *ārati*.

e) The **Maha Shivaratri** worship was conducted on Sunday, the 10th of March 2013 from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.. A large number of devotees assembled to worship Lord Shiva. Devotional songs were sung by the monks and devotees during and after the worship.

f) The **birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna** was celebrated on Wednesday, the 13th of March 2013. In the morning, elaborate worship, havan, chanting of hymns from various scriptures, devotional songs, and aratrikam were conducted. In the evening, Mr. Sandipan Ganguly

Sydney Centre— (below) On the occasion of the birth ann. of Swami Vivekananda and One Day Spiritual Retreat.



Sydney Centre— On the occasion of Shivaratri and the birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna.

presented a Sarod recital and Swami Sridharananda gave a talk on the life and teachings of the Sri Ramakrishna. Devotees partook of *prasadam* both after the morning worship and the evening programme.

g) The birth anniversary of **Sri Krishna Chaitanya** was observed on the 27th of March 2013.

h) **Ramanavami** was celebrated on the 19th of April 2013 with singing of *Rāmanām* and other *bhajans*.

i) **Sri Shankaracharya Jayanti** was celebrated on the 26th of April 2013 with the singing of *bhajans*.

New posting:

Swami Sunishthananda arrived on the 12th of February 2013.

Overseas Visit:

Swami Sridharananda visited **New Zealand** from the 27th to the 31st of January and from the 27th to the 31st of March 2013. He also visited **Hong Kong** from the 17th to 27th 22nd of April 2013 on invitation and gave talks on spiritual subjects.

AUCKLAND CENTRE

Daily activities:

A vesper service is held daily from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the Centre at 27 Arawa Street, New Lynn, Auckland. It includes the singing of hymns and readings from the *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master*, followed by meditation.

Monthly and annual activities:

a) On the second Sunday of every month **satsang** programmes, which include the singing of *bhajans*, discourse on the *Ramayana*, readings and discussion on the lives

of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and meditation were conducted from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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

c) Swami Sridharananda conducted classes on the *Bhagavad Gītā* from the 24th, to the 26th of January from 7:45 p.m. to 9 p.m.; on the 27th of January from 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.; from 28th to 30th March 2013 from 7:45 p.m. to 9 p.m. and on 31st of March from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Celebrations:

a) **Kalpataru Day** was celebrated on the 1st of January 2013. The program started at 11 a.m. with *bhajans*. Devotees talked about the significance of **Kalpataru Day** and the **Life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna**. The *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* was read on the day. The programme ended after *ārati*

with *prasad* distribution at 1 p.m.

b) The **Birth Anniversary of Holy Mother** was celebrated on the 4th of January 2013. The program started at 8 p.m. after vesper service and ended at 9 p.m. with *prasad* distribution. Devotees talked about the life and message of the Holy Mother and the Divine aspect of Holy Mother by comparing her with Goddesses Saraswati, Annapurna and Meenakshi.

c) The **Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda** was celebrated on the 3rd of February 2013. The programme started at 11 a.m. and ended at 1 p.m. with *prasad* distribution. It started with *bhajans* followed by talks and readings on the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda. The programme ended with *prasad* distribution after the *ārati*.

d) The **Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna** was celebrated on the 13th of March 2013. The programme started after the vesper service at 8 p.m. and ended at 9 p.m. with *prasad* distribution. The Programme consisted of *bhajans*, reading from the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, and a talk on the Life of Sri Ramakrishna and His *Sadhana*.



Auckland, NZ Centre— Gita discourse in progress.

Photo Feature :

The Vedanta Centre of Sydney

The Construction of the Vivekananda Memorial Multi-Purpose Community Facility at 2 Stewart Street, Ermington 2115.

We earnestly request generous persons not to miss this opportunity to get actively involved in this noble venture. Any contribution towards the construction of this institution will be thankfully accepted and acknowledged.





150th
Birth Anniversary of
Swami Vivekananda
1863 - 2013

News Digest

My ideal, indeed,
can be put into a few words,
and that is: to preach unto mankind
their divinity, and how to make it
manifest in every movement of life.



In connection with the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda various programmes are being organised world-wide. Some of them are mentioned below -

1) On the 2nd of August 2011 a postal stamp was released in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia by the General Secretary Swami Prabhananda.

2) In May 2012, the **Central Board of Secondary Education, India** instructed all of its schools to organize related programmes throughout the year. Further, the Board has now initiated an award called the **Vivekananda School of Excellence, 2013** for the schools who have participated in organizing such programmes. In all, 1131 teachers have been trained to conduct the programmes.

3) On 27 December 2012, The University Grants Commission (UGC), New Delhi, has instructed all the higher educational institutions in India (colleges, universities, etc.) to organise various events throughout the year.

4) On the 9th of December 2012 a laser show titled 'Swamiji', made by Sri Manick Sorcar, was organised by the Ramakrishna Mission Delhi. About 1500 people watched the show.

5) The **National Youth Day** (12 January) was celebrated with great enthusiasm and in an impressive way by many of our centres.

6) On the 12th of January the **Ramakrishna Math Chennai** organized competitions on the quotations of Swami Vivekananda in which about ten lakhs (one million) students from 3000 educational institutions of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Pondicherry and Tamil Nadu



The President of India at the birth place
of Swami Vivekananda on the 12 of
January 2013.

participated. The first three placements in each group, received the prizes and a total of 15,000 students participated actively. The **Headquarters** (along with Saradapitha) celebrated the Day with various programmes such as processions, speeches, recitations and cultural competitions.

7) The year-long festivity in connection with the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda was inaugurated by Shri Pranab Mukherjee, the President of India, at Swamiji's Ancestral House, Kolkata, on 18 January 2013 at 10:30 a.m.

8) On the 20 January 2013, a programme was held at Belur Math premises in three sessions from 10 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. which was graced by Reverend President Maharaj, two Vice-President Maharajs, Union Health Minister, the Chief Minister of West Bengal and other dignitaries and attended by about 10,000 devotees.

9) The 'Sustained Graded Value Education Programme' (SGVEP), undertaken by the Ramakrishna Mission and other programmes are running smoothly.

a) The **Classroom-based** Programme for Value Education, based on prescribed books, were given to

students in their schools twice a week. 1,12,577 students from 16 states benefitted by it.

b) The **Non-formal programme** conducted in our centres and other institutions. including prayer, meditation, devotional singing, chanting of Swamiji's Swadesh Mantra, moral lessons, question and answer session, audio-visual session, yogasanas, etc. were held and 17,006 students from 14 states were benefitted by it.

10) From the 18th February to the 14th March 2013 the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata and The Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Kolkata presented the **Renaissance of India and The World, Life and Mission of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, a visual tribute (exhibition)** from contemporary artists of India, to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda at Rabindranath Tagore Centre, ICCR, Kolkata from 11 a.m to 7 p.m.

11) On the 28th of January 2013 the British Parliament passed a Early Day motion no. 976 in recognition of the valuable contribution of Swami Vivekananda in interfaith dialogue at International level. Please visit - <http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2012-13/976> . On the 11th of January 2013 BBC telecasted the following news item: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-20981606>

Summarised from belurmth.org

Please visit it for details.

Some other websites:

<http://www.rkmdelhi.org/>

<http://rkmath.org/>

<http://vivekanandahouse.org/>

<http://shashwatabharata.in/>

Sri Ramakrishna in Bhavamukha

Bhavamukha is an exalted state in which an Incarnation of God keeps his pure mind on the border between the Absolute and the Relative. From this position one can contemplate the ineffable and attributeless Brahman and also participate in the activities of the relative world, seeing in it the manifestation of God alone, therefore he knows all.

"The One born as Rama of incomparable greatness in all the three worlds; who was the very life of Janaka's daughter; who, though himself beyond the world, did not give up doing good to it; the current of whose love ever flowed unchecked down even to a Chandala; and whose body of supreme knowledge was enveloped by devotion in the form of Sita; the One born as Krishna too, who sang the song (the Gita) sweet and tranquil, yet deep as the roar of a lion, suppressing the great cataclysmic tumult raised in the battle-field and destroying the innate and deep-seated darkness of ignorance-that ever-renowned divine Personality is now born as Ramakrishna."

— Swami Vivekananda, Translation of two stanzas of a Sanskrit verse composed by Swami Vivekananda.

"This new faith of the age is the fruitful source of all blessings to the world, especially to India (Bharata); and Sri Bhagavan Ramakrishna, the founder of this new religion of the age, is the reformed manifestation of the ancient holy founders of the religions of the past."

— Swami Vivekananda, From *The Hindu Religion and Sri Ramakrishna, The Complete works of Swami Vivekananda*.

Introduction

At the end of the extraordinary austerities practised continually for twelve years, the Master was bidden by the Mother of the universe to "Remain in Bhavamukha", whose command he obeyed. Twenty-eight years ago Swami Vivekananda once said to a friend, "Shelves of philosophical books can be written on each single sentence spoken by the Master." The friend was surprised to hear it and said, "Is that so? We, however, do not find so deep a meaning in his words. Will you please explain to me any of his utterances in that manner?" Swamiji replied, "...Take any saying of the Master and I shall prove my statement." The friend said, "All right, please explain the story of the elephant-god and the mahout-god related by the Master to illustrate his instruction on seeing God in all beings."

The Swami at once took up the controversy over the doctrines of free will and of pre-destination, or personal effort and God's will, raging perpetually among the scholars of both the East and the West without their approaching any conclusion, and continued for three days to explain to the friend, in simple language, that this story of the Master was a wonderful solution to that controversy. On reflection, one is amazed to find such profundity of meaning in the ordinary daily conduct of the Master and in his teachings, as the following examples reveal.



Sri Ramakrishna
(1836 -1886)

'Give me the power of attorney'

After meeting the Master a few times, one day Girish offered himself completely to him and said, "What shall I do from now on?"

The Master replied, "Go on, be doing what you have been doing. Now keep to both sides, this (God) and that (the world). When one side (that is, the world) drops off, whatever is ordained to happen will happen. But continue to remember and think of Him every morning and evening." Saying this, he looked at Girish, as if waiting for a reply.

At this, Girish was sad and thought, "The nature of my work is such that I cannot keep regular time even for satisfying my daily physical needs such as eating, drinking, sleeping etc. I am certain to fail to remember God and to think of him morning and evening. So how can I agree? It

is certainly wrong to fail to keep one's promise to any person in this world, much more so, a promise to a person whom one is going to accept as one's spiritual guide."

Girish was hesitating even to express his thoughts. He continued to think that surely the Master had not asked him to do a very difficult task. As he knew correctly the state of his mind, which was full of outgoing tendencies, he found that it was, as it were, beyond his power to practise even that little of religious duties every day. Again, looking at his own nature, he found that he felt suffocated even to think that he was to submit himself to an obligation binding him forever to a vow or rule. He felt that his mind would feel no peace till that vow or rule was broken. This was true all through his life. Realising his very weak and helpless condition, he felt distressed and kept silent. Finding that Girish remained silent, the Master looked at him, and knowing his thoughts, said, "Very well, if you cannot do that, remember Him once before taking food and once before going to bed."

Girish continued to be silent. He asked himself if he could do even that. He took his food at 10 a.m. on some days and at 5 p.m. on others, and there was the same irregularity about his night meals. There were days on which although he might be taking his meal, he was not at all conscious of the fact, on account of the troubles and worries regarding

the cases pending in the courts. The Master was asking him to do such an easy thing, and yet he could not say that he would do it. Girish was in a very sorry plight and remained motionless and speechless; but there raged, as it were, a storm of anxiety, fear and despair in his heart. The Master looked at Girish again and said smilingly, "You seem to say, 'I cannot do it.' Very well, then give me the power of attorney." The Master was then in a state of divine semi-consciousness.

This was to Girish's liking. His mind was now calm. And there swelled in his heart an infinite onrush of love for, and reliance on the Master for his infinite grace. He felt relieved that the bondage of rule, which was a terror to him, was now gone forever. It was now sufficient to have the firm faith that whatever he might do, the Master would save him some way or other by his divine power. Giving the power of attorney to the Master meant then to Girish nothing more than this: that he would not have to give up anything by means of personal efforts or to bother about spiritual practices, and that the Master would remove the last vestige of worldliness from his mind through his own powers. But he did not then realise that he had put voluntarily round his neck a noose of love a hundred times stronger than the bondage of rule, which, he thought, was so unbearable. He failed to dive sufficiently deep into the significance of what he had undertaken. All other thoughts vanished from his mind and he was feeling the endless grace of Sri Ramakrishna—in fact, a new ego rooted in Sri Ramakrishna was born and was fast developing in him. A spirit of divine defiance of the world came upon him, and he thought that whatever the world might speak of him, even if it despised him, it was quite immaterial; for, the Master was undoubtedly his in all circumstances and at all times. And while eating, drinking or engaged in any other activity, he had but one thought, viz., Sri Ramakrishna had taken upon himself all his responsibility – a soothing thought, a balm to his mind, which, through its deepening impression, was gradually gaining

mastery over his whole being and involuntarily making him meditate on the Master, thus bringing about a revolution in him, in all his thoughts and actions. He was happy, though he did not understand all that. For, he thought, was it not a fact, that he (Sri Ramakrishna) loved him and was more than his own?

'I shall do it if God so wills'

The Master always taught that "nobody's spiritual attitude of mind should be interfered with", and he used to act accordingly in his daily dealings with the devotees. Knowing well Girish's spiritual mood, he began to give instructions thenceforth in accordance with that mood. One day when Girish said in the presence of the Master, "I will do it," in respect of a trifling matter, the Master remonstrated suddenly saying, "Look here! Why do you say 'I will do it? Suppose you cannot do it. What then? You should say, 'I shall do it if God wills it.' " Girish on his part felt, "This is quite right. I completely placed on God all my responsibility, and He has accepted it. I can do a thing only if He thinks it proper and good for me and allows me to do so. How can I do it by my own power?" Realizing this, he gradually gave up such words and ideas as "I will do it", "I will go", and so on.

Thus days rolled on, and at last the Master passed away. Girish met with various calamities, e.g., the death of his wife, son and others; but his mind began to assert every time. "He (Sri Ramakrishna) is allowing these events to happen, only because they are good for you (himself). You have transferred your responsibility to him and he has accepted it; but he has given you no assurance regarding the path along which he will take you. Knowing that this path is easy for you, he is leading you along it. You have no reason to say 'no' or grumble against it. Were they then empty words—that you gave him the power of attorney or transferred your responsibility to him?" Thus as days passed, the hidden meaning of 'giving the power of attorney' became more and more clear to Girish. Asked about it, Girish said, "Much remains to be understood even now. Did I know

then that so much lay hidden in this simple giving of the power of attorney? I now find that at some stage there is an end to the spiritual practices like Japa, austerities and other devotional practices, but there is no end to the work of a person who has given 'the power of attorney.' " For he came to realize that he had to watch at every step and every breath whether in all his thoughts and deeds he was depending on Him and His power, or on this wretched 'I'.

Wonderful meanings in the Master's words and actions

Ask any devotee of the Master and he will unhesitatingly declare that with the passage of time, he finds through the Master's grace, deeper and deeper meanings in his words. For example, a favourite saying of the Master, "Ah, my children, you will succeed at the right time; you will understand at the proper time. Can you get a fruit immediately after you sow the seed? First it becomes a sprout, then a sapling, and then a plant; next it produces flowers and at last it yields fruits. It is just like that. But one has to persevere and not give up the struggle. Listen to what is said in this song." Saying so, the Master would sing in his melodious voice:

"Oh brother, persist joyfully,
You will succeed gradually,
What went wrong will be set right.
Anka was saved, Banka was saved,
And the butcher Sujan was saved.
Teaching the parrot, the prostitute
was saved,
So was saved Mira Bai.
Having the wealth and treasure of the
world,
The trader still drives the bullock,
When misfortune overtakes him;
No trace (of all these) will be left.
Have such deep devotion in your
mind;
Give up hypocrisy and craftiness.
The King of the line of Raghus will
be attained easily,
By virtue of service, worship and
surrender."

He would then say, "His service, worship and surrender, (humility)-everything will be achieved, if one has faith and adheres to these things; His direct vision is certain. But if one gives these up, all progress stops.

Again, while he was singing, "You will succeed gradually," the Master would suddenly say, "Ah, why gradually? One should not be lukewarm in devotion. One should have a burning faith in one's heart, and feel the urge: 'realization must come right now; I must see Him this very moment.' Can half-hearted devotion help one to realize him?"

Awareness of all ideas

The most striking thing seen in the Master was his power of roaming everywhere in the realm of ideas- his power of understanding all ideas, great or small, of all persons, of a boy or an adult, of a monk or a householder, of a devotee or a Vedantin, of a man or a woman; his power of grasping the inner thoughts and sentiments of each spiritual aspirant, of knowing how far he had advanced in the realm of spirituality, what path he had adopted, what his current needs were for taking him further along his own line of progress; and what is most important, his wonderful power of prescribing just the course that was needed and suitable. When we deeply think of these things, it seems to us that the Master had previously experienced in his life the whole range of ideas past, present and future without exception.

When anyone came to him as a humble inquirer, confronted with, and inextricably involved in extremely trying situations like worldly attachments, worldly turmoil, or the persistence of some idea or emotion contrary to the pursuit of renunciation and other spiritual values, the Master would invariably give him the proper direction, and by way of encouragement, tell him of his own experiences under similar conditions. He would say, "My child, such and such events came to pass then, and I adopted such and such means." It is needless to add that a great hope filled this inquirer's heart when the Master said so, and with much faith and perseverance, he went forward along the path specified by the Master. That was not all; he felt how great the Master's love for him was when he saw him confiding his heart's secrets to him. An example is given here.

A promising son of Manimohan

Mallick of Sinduriapati, Kolkata, died. No sooner had he performed the ceremonies connected with the cremation that Manimohan came to the Master. Saluting the Master he sat with a heavy heart in a corner of the room. He saw many inquiring devotees, seekers after truth, men and women, sitting in the room and the Master was talking to them on various spiritual topics. He sat for a short time when the Master's eyes happened to fall on him, "Well why do you look so sad today?" In a choked voice, Manimohan answered, "So-and-so (naming his son) has died today." Seeing his haggard appearance and hearing his choked voice, everyone in the room was dumbfounded and sat speechless. Everyone knew that mere words of consolation could not stop the deep pain and agony raging in his heart. Nevertheless they began to console him with various words.

Man has been consoling men and women struck with grief from the beginning of creation in such words. But, alas, how few are the hearts that are so consoled! And how can they be? It is only when the three things viz., our mind, words and actions are inspired by the same feeling that our words can touch others' hearts and raise similar waves of feeling there.

The Master was all the time merely listening to his words of grief without speaking anything whatever. Gradually the Master passed into ecstasy—a state of divine semi-consciousness. Suddenly with the pose and energy of a wrestler he struck his left arm just below the shoulder with the palm of his right hand, stood up and began singing with an unprecedented vigour: "O man prepare yourself for battle etc."

The tune of the song expressing great vigour and appropriate gesture coupled with the spirit of heroic renunciation and strength coursing from the Master's eyes produced in the hearts of all a current of wonderful hope and energy. Manimohan too felt it in his heart, forgot the agonising grief and became calm with the divine effect. The master then narrated how he was detached in the beginning and how agonising pain he felt when

Akshay, his nephew passed away. Listening the whole episode thus Manimohan was pacified.

Conclusion

Dwelling in Bhavamukha, the Master became an embodiment of all moods, and could therefore know exactly the mental states of all, men and women, and appear to each as one of his or her sex. As he was always dwelling in Bhavamukha, the whole of the universe always appeared to him to be composed of nothing but ideas. He felt as if all things—men and women, cows and horses, wood and earth etc. were rising and merging as different aggregates of ideas in the Universal Mind, and through those coverings of ideas, the infinite indivisible ether of Existence-Consciousness was manifesting itself in varying degrees. Again, the immaculate son of the blissful Mother of the universe that he was, the Master found himself on the point of merging in Her for good, realizing through Samadhi the bodiless state of absolute Bliss after the voluntary offering of everything belonging to him—the body, mind, mental functions and all—at Her lotus feet; but reaching that point, he came to know that the Divine Mother willed otherwise. In complete obedience to her command, he forcibly covered his mind, which had got fully merged in the indescribable state devoid of duality and non-duality, with the veil of Vidya-Maya, the force tending Godward, and engaged himself in carrying out Her behests. The Universal Mother, the embodiment of infinite power, on Her part, became pleased with the Master; and although She kept him encased in a body, She always kept his mind keyed to a lofty pitch, a high state of Oneness, from which all ideas rising to the infinite Universal Minds were always felt to be his own. The identification was so intimate and natural that whoever saw him felt that the Mother was the Son and the Son the Mother—both were Consciousness: "The abode is Consciousness, the name is Consciousness, and the Lord is Consciousness."

Source: *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* Vol.1 by Swami Saradananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai, page 367-399.

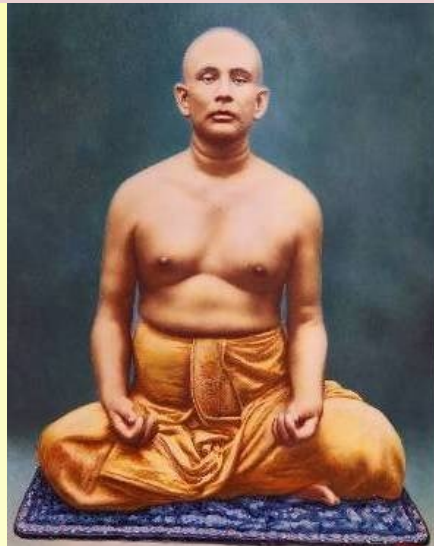
Years of Wandering and Austerity*Like a true Vedantin, he lived a life of asceticism and continence.***(Cont. from the previous issue of Reach)****Introduction**

In June 1899 Turiyananda left for England and America with Vivekananda and his Irish disciple, Sister Nivedita. After visiting England, the two swamis left for America on 16th August 1899. Soon after their arrival in New York, they went to Ridgely Manor, the Leggett family's country home, where they rested for a few weeks. Then one day Vivekananda told Turiyananda, "Brother, I don't have any money. I am going to San Francisco. Now you find a means of supporting yourself." This was a shock to Turiyananda, as he was fresh from India. Swamiji told him, "Don't be frightened when I say you have to conduct classes and lectures. Whatever you say will do good to the people. Show them what spirituality is."

Turiyananda moved to Mrs Wheeler's residence at Montclair in New Jersey, forty miles from New York City, where there was a Vedanta Society led by Abhedananda. The swami began to give classes at Montclair, and conducted services in New York on Saturdays and Sundays, when Abhedananda was not in the city. The students of the New York Vedanta Society accepted Turiyananda with love because of his simple, meditative nature.

Shanti Ashrama

On 4th July 1900 Turiyananda left New York by train, along with Swamiji and Miss Boock. This was the last time the two brother disciples would be together. Just before Swamiji got off the train at Detroit, Turiyananda asked for advice regarding his future work. Swamiji said, "Go and establish the Ashrama in California. Hoist the flag of Vedanta there. From this moment destroy even the memory of India. Mother will do the rest." Turiyananda arrived in Los Angeles on 8th July 1900. He became the guest of Miss Boock's sister in Alhambra, and later went to the Mead sisters' house in Pasadena.



Swami Turiyananda (1863 -1921)
(One who enjoys the bliss of the Fourth State of consciousness, Samadhi)

Then, after a couple of weeks, he moved to San Francisco, where the members of the Vedanta Society cordially received him. They told him what Vivekananda had said, "I will send you a real Hindu monk, who lives what I talk about." Turiyananda responded, "I am a row boat: I can take two or three to the other side of this ocean of the world. But Swamiji is an Atlantic liner: he can take thousands." While he was in San Francisco, he gave some lectures and conducted meditations in the mornings.

On 2nd August he left for the new retreat with a dozen enthusiastic men and women. They travelled by train to San Jose, then by four-horse stage to Mount Hamilton, and thence by private horse carriage some twenty-two miles over narrow mountain roads to the San Antonio Valley.

Ashrama life began under primitive conditions-no running water, no electricity, and no bathroom facilities. There were snakes, scorpions, and tarantulas all around. They had to bring water from a distance of six miles, and lived on vegetarian food. Moreover, there was no market nearby. Turiyananda found himself in a wilderness, with all these

people depending solely on him. He felt disheartened. The ordeals and hardships continued in that remote, rugged mountain area. The students, however, had a wonderful teacher of Vedanta, who had the power to raise their minds to a higher realm of spirituality where they could lose body consciousness. In the beginning, they had only one small cabin and a shed, and their first meal was boiled rice and brown sugar. After supper they gathered around a campfire, and the swami chanted, "We meditate on the adorable and effulgent light of Brahman who has produced this universe. May He enlighten our understanding."

Turiyananda named the retreat "Shanti Ashrama," the abode of peace; everyone worked hard to create a spiritual atmosphere there. First, they built the meditation cabin, and gradually added more cabins for the ashrama members. Although there was an informal daily routine in the ashrama, one day someone suggested that formal rules be set. Turiyananda replied, "Why do you want rules? ... Mother has made her own rules. Let us be satisfied with that... This is the highest organization; it is based on spiritual laws."

Daily routine at Shanti Ashrama

Every morning at five o'clock, Turiyananda would waken the members of the retreat with his melodious chanting. He and the men would take their baths at a well, some distance from the main camp. This routine was followed both in summer and winter. In winter they would build a fire in the meditation room and meditate there for an hour, but in summer they meditated under the trees. When they entered the shrine, everyone carried a cushion to sit on and removed their shoes. Turiyananda would enter last of all, and would glance around to see the students had all come and were in their places along the walls. He would chant in Sanskrit before and after meditation, which created a deep spiritual atmosphere.

After meditation, the women would prepare breakfast. The men would be engaged in different chores. Turiyananda took a lively interest in everything, and he participated heartily in the work. At 8 a.m., breakfast was served in the canvas dining tent. The swami would talk on various subjects and everyone joined in the conversation. But Turiyananda never allowed them to drift away from their main topic: spiritual life. After breakfast, all attended to their respective duties. They met again at 10 a.m. for a one-hour Gita class, which was followed by one hour of meditation. At 1 p.m. they had lunch and then the students were free for some time. Those who wanted tea could have it at 4 p.m. At 7 p.m. supper was served; and at 8 p.m. they started their two-hour evening meditation. At 10 p.m. all retired to their tents.

Turiyananda kept a watchful eye on all the students and their activities. He was often seen with some disciple or other, giving advice or having fun. In the kitchen one day the swami found a woman tasting the food to see whether salt had been added. "During the cooking process, we do not taste the food in India," he told her, "because it is offered to the Lord. We do not cook for ourselves or the family or ourselves. We cook food as an offering to God. After we have offered it to Him, it is distributed among the members of the family...Every act of our life must be made as an offering to God, then we shall advance spiritually."

Whenever flowers were presented to the swami, he would place them before the picture of Sri Ramakrishna in the shrine, without smelling them, and without any comment. Gurudas asked, "Don't you care for the flowers, swami?" "Oh, yes," he said, "otherwise how could I offer them to the Master? But we never smell flowers before offering them to God."

Sometimes Turiyananda would speak about Sri Ramakrishna's great love and childlike simplicity. One day he said in a hushed voice, "Once our Master told us that he had other disciples who spoke in a different language, who had different customs, somewhere far away in the West.

'They also will worship me,' The Master said. 'They also are Mother's children.' You are those disciples," Turiyananda said very solemnly. "Mother has revealed it to me."

Lesson in Forbearance

A real Vedantin is supposed to transcend body consciousness and be immersed in the Atman. Physical pain and mental affliction should not perturb him. One day in the meditation cabin, a poisonous beetle bit Turiyananda's hand. Without even opening his eyes to see what had bitten him, he flicked the insect aside and continued with his meditation. Slowly his hand began to swell; by the following morning, his whole arm was badly swollen, which caused the students great anxiety. The nearest doctor was fifty miles away, and they had no transport except a horse and a two-wheeled cart. Then something like a miracle happened. A young doctor from New York arrived in the evening, after having walked fifty miles. He immediately opened his kit, lanced Turiyananda's hand, and applied the necessary remedies. The students were greatly relieved. In this incident, they observed Turiyananda's power of forbearance. This doctor later became one of Turiyananda's most earnest disciples.

Teaching Vedanta at Shanti Ashrama

In Shanti Ashrama, the students learned the profound truths of Vedanta from Turiyananda. One day he said to them, "You are always speaking of being good. That is your highest ideal. We in India want *mukti*, liberation. You believe in sin, so you want to conquer sin by being good. We believe ignorance to be the great evil, so we want to conquer ignorance with *jnana*, wisdom. And *jnana* is *mukti*, 'Know the Truth,' Jesus said, 'and the Truth shall make you free.'"

Another day, someone asked the swami why there was so much evil in the world. He replied, "Tulasidas says, 'To the good the world is full of good; but to the bad the world is full of evil.' The world is neither good nor bad. What I call good you perhaps call bad, and the reverse. Where is the standard? The standard is in our own attitude towards life.

Each one has his own standard. And with increased experience and insight, the standard changes. The pity is that we still recognize evil. When we become perfectly good ourselves, the whole world will appear good. We see only the reflection of our own minds. See the Lord always in everything, and you will see no evil. A suspicious mind sees evil everywhere; a trusting mind sees only good."

In her memoirs, Ida Ansell described how Turiyananda taught practical Vedanta. She was entrusted with the duty of taking notes of the swami's class talks. One time her pencil was dull, so she sharpened it with a blunt knife. As a result, the point was jagged and asymmetrical. Turiyananda happened to notice this. He picked up the pencil and, with the same knife, carefully whittled the jagged wood into a smooth, symmetrical point. Handing it back to her, he said, "Make every act an act of worship. Whatever you do, do it as an offering to the Mother and do it as perfectly as you can."

Turiyananda hated procrastination. He once quoted a proverb, "Whatever you have to do tomorrow, do today; whatever you have to do today, do this minute." In community life, there are always occasions when differences of opinion lead to fault-finding. Turiyananda noticed this in the ashrama community, and remarked one day, "We are like dogs in glass houses, barking at our own reflections. We see another's *sushupti* [deep sleep], not our own. We should be strict with our faults and lenient with the faults of others."

The value of sincerity

"Sincerity," Turiyananda told the students, "is the backbone of spirituality. One should practise it in one's actions and thoughts. There should be no disagreement between what one feels and what one says; and, at the same time, one should not be cruel or unkind when one adheres to truth. Make your heart and tongue one." Then he quoted a Sanskrit proverb, "Say what is kind, but not what is untrue. Say what is true, but not what is unkind." Finally, he chanted a beautiful verse from the *Mundaka Upanishad*: "Truth alone

triumphs, not falsehood. The path by which sages reach perfection is the path of truth. There is no other way to freedom-no other way.” (3.1.6)

In Shanti Ashrama, Turiyananda freely distributed the greatest spiritual treasures of India to his American students. He asked them to preserve these teachings. Gurudas recorded in his memoirs some immortal teachings of Vedanta, taught by Turiyananda:

“Be yourself, and be strong. Realisation is only for the strong, the pure and the upright. Remember that you are the Atman. That gives the greatest strength and courage. Be brave; break through the bondage of maya. Be like the lion; don’t tremble at anything. Swamiji has taught you that every soul is potentially divine. Realize your own divinity, then you will realize that all souls are divine. A cloud obscures the sun. We say, ‘There is no sun.’ But the sun always shines. So the cloud of ignorance makes us believe that we are weak human beings. But the sun of the Atman is always shining. Remove the cloud of ignorance, and the Atman will reveal itself in your heart. When you realize that, then you are a man. Otherwise you are not different from beasts.”

And when asked how this can be realized, he answered, “Through meditation. Meditation is the key that opens the door to Truth. Meditate, meditate! Meditate till light flashes into your mind and the Atman stands self-revealed. Not by talk, not by study-but by meditation alone the Truth is known.”

It was in this same spirit of trusting in God alone that the swami was very strongly opposed to all planning. There also he used almost the identical language, “Why do you plan? Why are you scheming? Why do you look so far ahead? Let Mother plan. Her plan comes true. Human planning is all in vain. She does not consent. She knows what will happen. The future is an open book to her. Live in the present; make the best of your time and opportunities. Don’t think of the future. Know for certain that Mother’s Will shall come to pass. Trust in Her. Only try to love

Her sincerely. Give yourself to Her. Let Her do with you as she wishes.” But on one occasion he said, “Trusting in Mother does not mean idleness. Try to know Her will, and then be up and doing like a man. Don’t you see? I am never idle. The mind must be occupied in some way or other. If you don’t do physical work, you must use your mind-read, study, meditate. And don’t spend your time in idle gossip. Gossip breeds mischief. If you talk, talk of the Lord.”

Of reading, Swami Turiyananda gave us the advice to read only books written by men of realisation. When he found a lady student studying a book of New Thought, he told her, “Go to the source. Don’t waste your time reading the ideas of every fool who wants to preach religion. There are thousands of books on religion. You cannot read them all. Therefore select the best. Only those who have realized the truth speak with authority. Only the true guru can lead us right, and the true guru is he who knows Brahman.”

Once a student versed in Christian Science asked, “Is it not our duty to keep our body healthy?” “Yes,” said the swami. “but from the highest standpoint, the body itself is the great disease. We want to go beyond the idea of body and to realize that we are the Atman. It is the love for our body that stands in the way to our realization of that higher state where we can say, ‘I am not this body. I am the Atman. The body is an illusion.’ As long as we love the body we cannot realize the self, and we shall be born again and again. But when we love the Atman then we become indifferent towards the body. And when all love for the body goes, liberation will come very soon.”

To live with Swami Turiyananda was a constant joy and inspiration. It was also an education, for one was learning all the time. And we all felt that spiritual help came through him. Sometimes gentle, sometimes the “roaring lion of Vedanta,” the swami was always fully awake. There was not a dull moment in the ashrama.

One morning some students were talking about the various reasons they had for coming to the ashrama, when

the swami happened to come there and asked what they were talking about. When they told him, he said, “If you fall into the river, jump in, or are thrown in, the result is the same-you get wet. Whatever the reason, now there is no escape. You have been stung by the cobra and you must die.” Another time, when there was talk of the possibility of someone leaving, the swami said, “Where will they go? Vedanta is the essence of religion. When you have seen the full moon in all its glory, who cares to look at a candle?”

Return to India

Turiyananda left Shanti Ashrama on 10th January 1901, and went to San Francisco for treatment of gallstones and other complications. During February and March 1901, at 770 Oak Street in San Francisco, Swami Turiyananda conducted a meditation class every day at 10 a.m.; and on Tuesdays and Thursdays he gave lectures on the Gita and Raja Yoga. For seven weeks, on Friday nights and Saturday mornings, Turiyananda held classes in the house of Mrs F.S. Rhodehamel in Oakland. In spite of his ill-health, Turiyananda gave lectures and classes in and around San Francisco for a few months, and then returned to Shanti Ashrama for a period of five months. Knowing of Turiyananda’s poor health, Vivekananda wrote to the president of the Vedanta Society of San Francisco and asked him to send the swami back to India. Turiyananda also expressed a desire to see Swamiji again. The Society decided to give him a first-class passage for India, in the hope that the long sea voyage and his meeting with Swamiji would have a beneficial effect on his health, and that he would come back to Shanti Ashrama with renewed zeal and strength.

Turiyananda left Shanti Ashrama in late May of 1902, and set sail for India from San Francisco on 6th June. He had stayed two years and nine months in the United State and of this, about eighteen months had been spent at Shanti Ashrama.

Source:

God lived with them: Life stories of Sixteen Monastic Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna by Swami Chetanananda, Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, pages 369-381.