



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

Egotism prevents God realisation

The sun can give heat and light to the whole world, but he cannot do so when the clouds shut out his rays. Similarly, as long as egotism veils the heart, God cannot shine upon it.

--- Sri Ramakrishna

Great sayings: *Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The R.M.I. Culture; Kolkata; p. 13.

Way to peace

“I tell you one thing – if you want peace, do not find fault with others. Rather see your own faults. Learn to make the world your own. No one is a stranger, my child; the whole world is your own”.

--- Sri Sarada Devi

Teachings of Sri Sarada Devi *The Holy Mother*; Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai p. 7.

Turn within realise Atman

“That Self-existent One is far removed from the organs. The organs or instruments see outwards, but the self-existing one, the Self, is seen inwards. You must remember the qualification that is required: the desire to know this Self by turning the eyes inwards.”

“... it is not that the assumed man becomes the real man or Absolute. There is no becoming with the Absolute. It is ever free, ever perfect; but the ignorance that has covered Its nature for a time is to be removed. Therefore the whole scope of all systems of Yoga (and each religion represents one) is to clear up this ignorance and allow the Atman to restore its own nature. The chief helps in this liberation are Abhyasa and Vairagya. Vairagya is non-attachment to life, because it is the will to enjoy that brings all this bondage in its train; and Abhyasa is constant practice of any one of the Yogas.”

--- Swami Vivekananda

The Complete works of Swami Vivekananda Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas.



Vedanta Centre of Sydney, 2 Stewart Street, Ermington, NSW 2115.
Below—view from Vedanta Centre facing South.

FORTHCOMING CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Function	Centre	Date
Birth Anniversary of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi	Adelaide	Saturday, 20 December 2014
	Brisbane	Saturday, 13 December 2014
	Melbourne	Saturday, 13 December 2014
	Perth	Saturday, 13 December 2014
	Sydney	Saturday, 13 December 2014
	Auckland	Saturday, 13 December 2014
Christmas Eve	All Centres	Wednesday, 24 December 2014
Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda	Adelaide	Saturday, 17 January 2015
	Brisbane	Saturday, 17 January 2015
	Melbourne	Saturday, 17 January 2015
	Perth	Monday 12 January 2015
	Sydney	Monday 12 January 2015
	Auckland	Saturday, 17 January 2015

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 May to August 2014.

ADELAIDE CENTRE

Monthly activities:

a) Swami Sridharananda continued his three-days-a-month visit to Adelaide and delivered discourses on the *Srimad-Bhagavad Gītā* at the Dulwich Community Centre, 14 Union Street, Dulwich SA 5065. A dedicated group of devotees attended 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 e-mail: vedanta.adelaide@gmail.com or Mrs. Pathma Iswaran on 08-8379 5336.

b) Every month on a prescheduled Sunday the **reading** from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* including discussion on relevant points were conducted at devotees' homes.

Other activities:

a) A special **memorial service** marking the passing away of Revered Swami Damodaranandaji was held on Saturday, the 2nd of August 2014 from 11 a.m. at the Dulwich Community Centre, 14 Union Street, Dulwich SA 5065. The programme started with Swami Damodaranandaji's favourite *bhajan* sung by Mrs. Mallika Prasad and concluded with a two minute silence. A number of devotees shared experiences and memories of their interactions with Revered Swamiji.

b) The **Annual General Meeting** of the Vedanta Centres of Sydney-Adelaide Chapter was held on Saturday 2nd of August 2014 from 1 p.m. at the Dulwich Community Centre, 14 Union Street, Dulwich SA 5065.

BRISBANE CENTRE

Daily activities:

Regular worship was conducted at the Centre daily in the morning. *Arati* (vesper service), singing of *bhajans*, readings from *The Gospel of Sri*

Ramakrishna constituted the evening programme at the Centre at **181 Burbong Street, Chapel Hill, QLD 4069**. **Contact person:** Swami Atmeshananda 0421 765 416, 07-3720 0228, e-mail: vedantabrisbane@gmail.com

Monthly Activities:

Swami Atmeshananda conducted the following programmes in Brisbane:

a) *Srimad-Bhagavad Gītā* classes at the Centre on Sundays.

b) Religious Instruction classes at two schools in Brisbane on Mondays and Wednesdays.

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

d) A **class** on *Ashtavakra Samhita* on alternate Thursdays at Springfield.

e) A **class** on Meditation and Spiritual Life on alternate Fridays.

f) **Prayer meetings** on the First Saturday of every month.

g) A **class** on *Viveka Chudamani* at Toowoomba during alternate months.

h) **Satsang** at Deception Bay on a prescheduled Friday every alternate month.

i) Singing of *Rāmanāma* on Ekadashi days that occur every fortnight.

j) Weekly **Sanskrit** class for beginners at the Centre.

k) **Bala Sangha** – Children's classes on every Sunday (except during school holidays).

Other activities:

a) A two-day Spiritual **Retreat** was

conducted by Swami Atmeshananda at the CQ University, Gladstone, North Queensland. The themes for the two days were:- i) "Concept of Self—Inner and Outer" and ii) "Success—Its Nature and Method".

b) A **special talk** on 'Spirituality in Everyday life' by Swami Sridharananda was organised at the City Council library at Kenmore on Thursday, the 12th of June 2014.

c) A **public lecture** was organised on the 20th of June at the Sunnybank Hills Shopping-town Library on the subject 'Integration of Personality'. There were various speakers who provided their perspectives based on the theme of 'Body, Mind and Spirit'.

d) Another bi-monthly **forum** on the theme 'Body Mind and Spirit' was conducted on the 16th of August 2014 at the Centenary Hub, Mount Ommaney. The subject chosen was *Relief of anxiety and tension through spiritual living*. Eminent speakers spoke on the subject. To cater to the residents of Springfield, another talk on the above subject was organized on the 29th of August 2014 at the Orion Shopping Centre community rooms at Springfield.

e) A special **Commemorative Meeting** was held on 26th July 2014 at the Centre in memory of the late Rev. Swami Damodaranandaji who passed away at Belur Math on 13th of July 2014. The Swami was instrumental in starting the first Vedanta Centre in Brisbane in rented premises in the year 2000. After



Choir on Annual Day and Memorial Meeting.



Brisbane Centre— BMS Forum, Spiritual retreat, Hon. Minister Glen Elmes and M. C. members on Annual Day.

worship and devotional singing, devotees recounted their memoirs about the departed Swami and expressed their gratitude to him for his blessings.

f) Devotees of the Centre set up **Sarada's Kitchen** – a food stall on the 19th of April 2014 at Robelle Domain, Springfield and on the 10th of August 2014 at Roma Street Parklands during fairs. Funds raised from the proceeds were donated to the Centre.

g) A day-long **Spiritual Retreat** was conducted on Saturday, 23rd August 2014 at the residence of Dr. and Mrs. Majumdar at Bridgeman Downs, Qld. Swami Sridharananda conducted the retreat and spoke on the theme 'How to convert our every day living into Worship of the Divine'. Devotees highly benefited from the retreat.

h) The **Annual General Meeting** of the Centre was held on Saturday, 29th of August 2014 at 89, Tiverton Place, Bridgeman Downs, Qld. Swami Sridharananda chaired the AGM. After election of the committee members and submission of reports, Swami Sridharananda spoke about the future plans of the Centre.

Celebrations:

a) **Buddha Purnima** was celebrated at the Centre on Saturday, 17th May 2014. Singing of Hymns and a talk on the life and teachings of Buddha formed part of the programme.

b) The **Annual Programme** of the Centre was held on 14th June 2014 at the Indooroopilly State High School. Mr. Glen Elmes, the Hon. Minister for Multicultural affairs, Qld government graced the occasion. Swami Sridharananda and other dignitaries were also present. The programme consisted of Choir music, Music by Aboriginal youth group, Classical Indian dances in addition to speeches. The programme concluded with dinner. About 550 people attended the event.

c) **Guru Purnima** was celebrated at the Centre on Saturday, 12th July

2014. The programme consisted of formal worship, chanting of hymns and singing of *bhajans* and concluded with a talk on the significance of Guru in our life. Devotees received dinner Prasad after the programme.

d) On the occasion of **Sri Krishna Janmashtami**, on Sunday, 17th of August 2014, worship was conducted at the Centre followed by singing of hymns, a talk on the Life of Sri Krishna and sharing of Prasad.

CANBERRA CENTRE

Swami Sridharananda conducted monthly classes on the *Srimad-Bhagavad Gītā* at the Belconnen Community Centre, 2 Chandler Street in Canberra. A special prayer meeting in memory of Swami Dhamodarananda was also held in July. **Contact person:** Mr. J. Venkataraman, Secretary on 02-6258 7612, email: jaishankar_venkataraman@hotmail.com.

MELBOURNE CENTRE

Daily Activities:

Worship in the morning at 7:30 a.m. and Vesper service from 7 to 8 p.m. were held daily in the Centre at **5-7 Angus Avenue, Ringwood, Vic 3135**. It included the chanting of regular hymns, devotional singing, readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, and meditation. **Contact persons:** Mr. Suresh Ravinutala, Secretary - 0413 040 599, e-mail: vedanta.melb@gmail.com, Swami Chandrashekharananda 0422 904 824.

The **bookstall** keeps 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-Gītā* from the Thursday to the Saturday of a prescheduled week at the Centre. The Thursday and Friday sessions were held from 7:45 to 9 p.m. and the Saturdays sessions were held from 10 to 11 a.m. The recordings of these discourses are available in audio, video and MP3 formats.

b) **Group study** through the viewing of the *Bhagavad-Gita* lecture series on video were held on Sundays from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Swami Chandrashekharananda conducted the following programmes in Melbourne;

c) **Classes** on the *Kathopanishad* on Sundays from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. at the Centre.

d) **Classes** on the *Bhagavad-Gītā* twice a month from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. at Clayton Community Hall but have now been shifted to Sankat Mochan Temple in Huntingdale.

e) **Meditation** sessions at the Centre on Sundays from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

f) **Sanskrit** classes for beginners and advanced students on Saturdays.

g) Singing of *Rāmanāma* on Ekadashi days and *Vishnu Sahashranama* and *Rudram /Chamakam* chanting occasionally.

h) A class on **Yoga** exercises were conducted by Dr. Aneja on Sundays from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.

Other activities:

a) The **Annual General Meeting** was conducted at 12:05 p.m. on 19th of July 2014 at the Ringwood East community hall, Knaith Road, Ringwood East, Vic 3135.

b) A **Spiritual Retreat** was conducted



Melbourne Centre— Guru Purnima, the Prayer Meeting and Sri Krishna Janmashtami.

from 9:15 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. on 17th of May 2014. The morning session started with the chanting of Vedic Mantras and the *bhajans* followed by a talk by Swami Sridharananda on the topic "What is spirituality? How to go about it?". The talk was followed by a practical session on "Meditation: Purpose, benefits and Guided meditation" by Swami Chandrashekharananda. After light lunch prasada - a video show, group discussion and another talk by Swami Sridharananda on the morning's topic, singing of *bhajans* etc. were other highlights of the programme. Prasada was distributed after the *ārati*.

c) In memory of Revered Swami Damodaranandaji Maharaj a memorial **prayer meeting** was held on 19th of August from 10:30 a.m. to about 12 noon at the Ringwood East Community Hall. *bhajans* were sung in the beginning and at the end by Smt. Sundari Saripalle and some devotees offered their tributes in eloquent terms remembering his love for all devotees.

d) On the 26th of July a **meditative session** was held in memory of Swami Damodaranandaji at the Centre with simple worship, chanting and meditation from 9:30 a.m. and concluded at about 12 noon.

Celebrations:

a) **Guru Purnima** was celebrated at the Centre on 12th of July from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. with worship, singing of *bhajans* and meditation etc.

b) **Krishna Janmastami** was celebrated on 17th of August from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Centre. Singing of *bhajans*, worship, reading from *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and a short talk on Sri Krishna by Swami Chandrashekharananda were the highlights of the function.

PERTH CENTRE

Daily Activities:

The Centre, located at **51 Golf View**

Street, Yokine W.A. 6060, held 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, e-mail: vedantaperth@gmail.com.

Monthly Activities:

The following monthly activities were held at the Centre:

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

b) Monthly **satsanga** was conducted on the first Sunday of every month from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. It included the singing of *bhajans* and readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and readings from other inspiring books.

Other Activities:

a) A special **memorial service** was held on 9th of August 2014 from 9:30 to 11 a.m. to pay respectful homage to Srimat Swami Damodarananda Maharaj.

b) Swami Sarvatmananda and Br. Douwe accompanied by Swami Sunishthananda visited Perth from 13th to 18th of August 2014. Swami Sarvatmananda delivered two **talks** on "The Ideal Way of Living as per Vedanta" and "The Aim of Life and How to Achieve it" on 15th and 17th of August 2014 respectively.

SYDNEY CENTRE

Daily Activities:

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

Counselling, interviews and discussions with devotees were conducted on a daily basis. The **library** was 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 Gītā*, 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-Gītā* every Sunday morning from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Centre.

b) **Parlour talks** were 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 of **spiritual counselling** and guidance. The Swamis also visited the homes of devotees when required.

d) *Isha Upanisad* **classes** were conducted on Wednesdays after evening *ārati* by Swami Sunishthananda.

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

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

g) Sri *Rāmanāma* was sung on *Ekadashi* days after the vesper service.

h) A **class** on *Katha Upanishad* for ladies was held every Monday from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. by Swami Sunishthananda.

i) The meetings of the **Viveka Youth Group** were held on Sundays from



Sydney Centre—Ganapati Homa, formal worship of the Holy Trinity and inaugural meeting.

8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. The *Karma Yoga* of Swami Vivekananda was read and discussed. For details please visit the Facebook page : <https://www.facebook.com/VYGSydney>.

j) A session on **Yoga Exercise** continued to be held on Saturdays from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Other activities:

a) A **Spiritual Retreat** was held on Saturday 26th of July 2014 from 8.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Apart from chanting, *bhajans*, reading inspiring texts and following these with discussions, Swami Sridharananda delivered a talk on the topic "How to Transform Mundane life into Spiritual" in two sessions followed by an interactive question-answer session. 35 delegates attended the Spiritual Retreat.

b) On Sunday, 27th July 2014 at 10 a.m. a special **prayer meeting** was held at the Vedanta Centre Community Hall to pay respectful homage to *Srimat Swami Damodaranandaji Maharaj* who passed away while fully aware and in control of his faculties on the morning of 13th July 2014 at Belur Math.

Special Worship of Guru Maharaj was performed. The devotees and monks offered their homage to Swami Damodarananda after the worship. *Prasāda* was arranged for all after the meeting. About 175 devotees, friends and admirers of the Swami attended the meeting.

Celebrations:

a) On Saturday, 12th of July 2014, **Guru Purnima** was celebrated in the evening. The programme started with a Youth Panel Discussion on the topic 'Role of a Guru or Acharya in our Lives' followed by the rendering of vocal classical music by Sri Anand Dixit. A talk on the topic 'Sri Ramakrishna as Guru' was delivered by Swami Sunishthananda after the evening *ārati* and special worship.

b) On Thursday, 17th of August 2014, **Sri Krishna Janmashtami**

was celebrated in the evening. The programme started with the chanting of Vishnu Sahasranama at 6 p.m., followed by *ārati*, worship of Sri Krishna, devotional songs, readings from the *Bhāgavatam* and a short talk on the Life of Sri Krishna.

Overseas Visit:

Swami Sridharananda visited New Zealand from the 4th to 8th of June 2014 and from the 27th to 31st of August 2014.

Visiting monastics:

Swami Sarvatmananda and Br. Douwe from Nederland visiting Vedanta Centre of Sydney and its various Chapters in Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane and Canberra on their way to India from 3rd of August 2014. They are scheduled to leave for India on 12th of September 2014.

AUCKLAND CENTRE

Daily activities:

A vesper service was held daily from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the Centre at **27 Arawa Street, New Lynn, Auckland**. It included the singing of hymns and readings from the *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi*, followed by meditation. **Contact Person:** M. Kumar, Secretary e-mail: monnay@ihug.co.nz

Monthly activities:

a) The first bi-monthly **Satsang** was conducted on the second Sunday of every month from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. It included singing of *bhajans*, discourse on the *Rāmāyana*, readings and discussion on the lives of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and meditation.

b) The second bi-monthly **Satsang** was conducted on the last Sunday of every month from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The programme included **reading and discussion on the *Bhagavad Gitā*, the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, the Life and Teachings of Holy Mother and the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda.**

Visit of Swami Sridharananda:

a) Swami Sridharananda conducted

Srimad-Bhagavad Gitā classes from the 5th to 8th of June 2014 and from 28th to 30th August 2014. Classes were held from 7:45 p.m. to 9 p.m. after the *ārati* and on Sundays from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

b) The **Annual General Meeting** was held at the Centre on 8th June 2014 from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. Swami Sridharananda presided over the meeting. New office bearers were elected on this occasion.

Celebrations:

a) **Guru Purnima** was celebrated on 12th July 2014. The program started with *bhajans* after the evening *ārati* at 8 p.m. It included talks and readings on Guru.

Other activities:

a) A **prayer meeting** was held on 31st of August 2014 in memory of Swami Damodharanandaji who left his mortal coils on 13th of July 2014. Swami Sridharananda presided over the prayer meeting. The program started with *bhajans* followed by tributes to the departed soul by Dr. Guna Sankaran Pillai and Mr. Shiu Ram. Both devotees were well acquainted with Swami Damodharanandaji for a long time. Finally Swami Sridharananda talked about the life of Swami Damodharanandaji, his service to the Ramakrishna Order and his relationship with the devotees. He also referred to the sanction of the scriptures with regard to discarding the mortal body by a soul spiritually advanced soul. The meeting ended with distribution of *prasada*.



Auckland Centre— Bhagavad Gita class and the Memorial Meeting.

Special Feature :

The Vedanta Centre of Sydney

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

The inaugural ceremony of the first phase was held from 2nd May to 4th May 2014.

We earnestly thank the contributors who generously supported and assisted us in this project.

INAUGURAL CEREMONY

The Inaugural Ceremony of the first Phase of the **Swami Vivekananda Memorial Multipurpose Community Facility Project** was held from Friday, 2nd May 2014 to Sunday, 4th May 2014 at the Vedanta Centre of Sydney. This was a tribute offered to Swami Vivekananda on the completion of his four-year-long 150th birth anniversary celebrations.

On the auspicious day of **Akshaya Tritiya**, the 2nd of May 2014, **Vastu Puja** (sanctification of the site) and **Ganapati Homa** were performed in the morning. This was followed by the Public Dedication Ceremony in which **Dr. Geoff Lee**, NSW State M.P. for Parramatta, **Mr John Chedid**, Lord Mayor, Parramatta City Council and **Mr John Pierre Abood**, Councillor, Parramatta City Council addressed the gathering as the Guest of Honour. **Mr. Maha Sinnathamby**, the Chairman of the Vedanta Centres of Australia delivered the Vote of Thanks. The contribution of workers and individuals involved in the construction work were gratefully acknowledged with suitable gifts.

A Devotees Convention and a Panel Discussion were organized on the morning of 3rd May 2014 at the Strathfield Town Hall. The long-standing senior members of the Vedanta Movement in Australia were felicitated on the morning of 3rd May 2014.

During the evenings of both the days: the 2nd and the 3rd of May 2014, cultural programmes were presented at the Strathfield Town Hall.

On Shankaracharya Jayanti, Sunday, the 4th of May 2014, Guru Maharaj Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda and other Divinities were installed in the newly constructed hall and special worship was performed. After the special worship, the Consecration Ceremony was held in which His Excellency, **Sri Biren Nanda**, The Honourable **High Commissioner of India** in Australia addressed the gathering as the Guest-of-Honour.

The Cultural Programme:

Many were the participants of the elaborate cultural performances. Over the two days, vocal music by **Ms. Shobha Inglehwar**, flute by **Sri Chith Eshwaran** accompanied on the tabla by **Smt. Shalaka Malgaonkar**, Volin and bass guitar by **Michael Spencer** and his friend, Kathak Classical dance by **Suhasini Sumithra** and **Sri Raghavan Nair**, Bharatanatyam performances by **Arabi Shivaraman's group**, **Gayathri Krishnamurthy's Tharayee School of Dance** and **Aruna Gandhi's group**, **Chitra Nagaraj**, **Hamsa Venkat's Samskriti School of Dance**, Kathak by **Smt. Ruchi 'Sanghi's group**, Odissi performance by **Odissi Dance**

and Music Company, Sarod recital by **Sri Sandipan Ganguli** accompanied on the tabla by **Murtaza Damoon**, Hindi *bhajans* by devotees, Semi Classical Karnatic music by **Smt. Sundari Saripalle**, and Violin recital by **Sri Niranjana Neelakantan** accompanied on the mridangam by **Sri Surya Raviganesh** were the dedicated presentations.

A two-part play titled, '**The Unique Master Sri Ramakrishna and His Unique Disciple Swami Vivekananda**', specially composed for the occasion, by **Smt. Ambika Prasad**, was presented over the duration of the two days program. Over 25 children from the Vedanta Centre's **Bala Sangha** and 20 young adults belonging to the **Ananya Samarpana group of devotees** participated in staging this play. The Cultural Program was conducted by **Sri Kalyan Balakrishnan** and **Smt. Padmini Rao**.

The Devotees' Convention:

The topic for the speakers at the Devotees Convention was "What 'Vedanta in practice - as epitomised by the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda' - means to me". Speakers were invited from each of the city chapters across Australia and New Zealand. It was apparent from the presentations that each participant had developed this same thought in their lives in their own unique way. This evidenced the dictum by Sri



Formal worship, Inaugural meeting, felicitation etc. during the Inaugural Ceremony.

Ramakrishna: “As many faiths, so many paths”.

Sri Maha Sinnhathamby from the **Brisbane Centre** opened the session with an impassioned plea to everyone imploring them to study the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, and in particular the booklet called *Thoughts of Power*. He put the momentous occasion of this inauguration in context of the overall history of the movement, stressed the importance of *satsang* (good company) and *sanskara* (good up-bringing) and ended on the tremendously positive, empowering and powerful assertion from Vedic texts - Thou Art That!

Sri Raman Sharma, from the **Adelaide Centre**, spoke about the importance of the role of the Guru as well as one's life partner in supporting the spiritual journey. He stressed on the need for sincerity in belief, the necessity to find one's own truth through honest enquiry, avoidance of needless 'intellectual wrestling', and looking at the world as a means to attain God, not the other way around.

Sri Monnay Kumar, from the **Auckland Centre** spoke about the dilemma of organised religion, and how Swami Vivekananda himself thought through the advantages and disadvantages before embarking on creating the Ramakrishna Mission. From that he drew the link to the importance of discipline in all matters, including temporal matters like money and funding, in order for institutions to remain faithful to their purpose and avoid the pitfalls of organised religion. He acknowledged the role of education in the journey to manifest the divinity in us, but also stressed that education can only “provide the ideas”, ultimately salvation has to be experienced through one's own faith, effort and contemplation.

Sri Jaishankar Venkataraman from the **Canberra Centre** spoke about the powerful combination of simplicity and relevance of the Holy Trinity and their teachings. He called

out the Master's sincerity and focus on experiencing for oneself, his homely and down to earth parables, the amazing simplicity of Mother's life, and also the relevance in the modern era of the combined understanding of eastern and western culture that Swami Vivekananda taught us.

Sri Suresh Ravinutala from the **Melbourne Centre** reminisced about growing up in an environment where thoughts like “I am not the body” were being discussed around him even in his childhood. He laid stress on mind control, on *abhyasa yoga*, the diversity of options made available to the spiritual seeker through the four *Yogas*, and also how Bhakti-Yoga could be seen as giving God our **Power of Attorney!**

Prof. Samir Chatterjee from the **Perth Centre** cautioned us against the tendency to allow compartmentalisation of inward vs outward activities in our lives. He stressed the need for having a robust spiritual anchor, a global sense of connected destiny, and the need to change ourselves first before lamenting lack of change in the world around us. He drew a fascinating contrast between the globalisation of the economy on one hand, but the lack of globalisation in spirituality on the other.

Sri Paul Notholt from the **Sydney Centre** spoke eloquently about how the Holy Trinity led their lives to give us an inspiring as well as attainable path to salvation. He expanded on the ideals and role models of the Holy Trinity with simple yet profound anecdotes. He spoke in particular about the worship of the Divine Feminine Power in the form of the Mother, the renunciation of lust and gold, the need to include all in our love, and the importance of separating the individual from the politics involved when addressing inter-community and international interactions. He also highlighted a number of parallels from the lives of Avatars from other religions and other parts of the world including Jesus Christ. All in all, it was a very thought-provoking session. The Holy Trinity

embodies three essential elements of our spiritual quest - absence of ego as exemplified by the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, an inclusive outreach to all of humanity as demonstrated by the Master Sri Ramakrishna himself, and the empowering message to all of us to have strength and have faith in oneself by Swami Vivekananda.

Youth Panel Discussion:

The second half of the program was a youth panel discussion, where 10 panellists presented their views about the relevance of Swami Vivekananda's work to contemporary global issues.

It was very rewarding to see these issues through the lens of the current generation, and to learn from them in the process. There were some commonalities amongst the participants: they were all very humble— they talked only about their way of thinking and not about themselves; they expressed both: the importance of parental influence in creating an interest in spirituality and Vedanta, and also a passion for their beliefs. It was very heartening to see many young minds embarking their own lives' journey under the inspiring guidance of Swamis.

In the first group of five, **Shamindra Shrotriya** spoke about the need to synchronise qualitative development with quantitative progress. Albert Einstein's famous quote was reminded - “not everything that can be counted, matters, and not everything that matters, can be counted”. **Priya Nallamuthu** spoke about coping with the 24/7 culture and the importance of “white space” in our lives if we are to aim for a life of contemplation. **Isha Deodhar** presented her views on what religious pluralism really means, how it can be “done right” to enable global peace, and how we should avoid the misguided side of organised religion. **Kunal Bhatt** shared his views on educational policies in the 21st century and how they should enable rather than hinder the student's spiritual quest. **Pragyaa Goswami**

(continued on page no. 12)



Cultural Programme during the inaugural Ceremony—Drama and Dance items.

Feature Article: The setting up of the stage for the Sadhana of Sri Ramakrishna At The Kali Temple in Dakshineswar

The first manifestation of the attitude of a Sadhaka

The first definite manifestation of the attitude of an aspirant in Sri Ramakrishna's life was at his brother's school in Kolkata. Ramkumar, his eldest brother admonished him to apply his mind on the acquisition of learning, to which Sri Ramakrishna clearly replied, "I do not want to learn the art of 'bundling rice and plantain'. What I do want is an education which produces right knowledge and enables man truly achieve the real aim of his life". He was then about seventeen years of age. Knowing that there was little chance of his education progressing in the village school, his guardians, after mutual consultation, sent him to Kolkata. His religious-minded eldest brother, well versed in Astrology and Smriti, had started a Sanskrit school near the house of the late Digambar Mitra and was teaching some pupils. He also took charge of the daily service of the deities in the Mitra family. Most of his time was spent in giving lessons to students and in performing his daily religious duties. After due consideration, he brought his youngest brother to Kolkata, placed him in charge of the service of the deities and applied himself to the work of teaching.

On arriving in Kolkata, Gadadhar (Sri Ramakrishna's childhood name) got his favourite work and performed it with pleasure. Besides serving his eldest brother, he also studied a little. Possessed of noble qualities, the pleasant-looking boy became dear to all the people in a short time. The veiled ladies of the various families did not feel any hesitation in appearing before him when they became acquainted with his smartness, guileless behaviour, sweet conversation and devotion to the gods. They were eager to get some odd jobs done by him and to listen to his devotional songs. However, Ramkumar who, urged by a sense of duty, asked Gadadhar to apply his mind to his studies. It was clear to him that some stage the simple-minded and self - forgetful boy would have to fend for himself.

The current of events in the life of Sri Ramakrishna and his eldest brother flowed fairly fast during the next two



The Kali Temple at Dakshineswar (views from south-east and south-west of the temple) and living room of Sri Ramakrishna.

years. The pecuniary condition of his brother was daily deteriorating and although he tried in various ways, he could not improve it. He pondered about whether he should close his school and take to some other job. There occurred then, by the will of God, an event, which showed Ramkumar a way out of that uncertainty and relieved him of all his anxieties.

Rani Rasmani and her vision

A famous lady named Rani Rasmani lived in Janbazar in the south of Kolkata. She was the mother of four daughters and became a widow at forty-four. She inherited the enormous property of her husband Rajchandra Das. Since then she had managed it herself and improved it much, and had thus become well known to the people of Kolkata. She became famous and endeared herself to all, not only by her ability to in managing the property, but also by her innumerable virtues and good works, such as her faith in God, her

energy, courage, intelligence, presence of mind and, above all, her sympathy for the poor. Endowed with such virtues, Rani Rasmani had great devotion to the holy feet of the Goddess Kali. 'Sri Rasmani Dasi, longing for the Feet of Kali', was the words engraved in the official seal of her estate. According to Sri Ramakrishna, the Rani's devotion to the Goddess was expressed in all her words and actions.

The Rani had cherished in her heart a desire to go to Varanasi and pay obeisance and offer special worship to Visvesvara, the Lord of the universe, and Annapurna, the Divine Mother. As she was preparing for her journey to Varanasi, she had the vision of the Goddess in a dream just the night before her departure. The Goddess gave her this instruction: "There is no need to go to Varanasi. Install my stone image in a beautiful spot on the bank of the Bhagirathi (Ganges) and arrange for My daily worship and food offering. I shall manifest Myself in the image and

accept your worship daily". The devout Rani was highly delighted to receive this instruction. She put off going to Varanasi and made up her mind to spend the accumulated money on that holy undertaking. She purchased a large piece of land on the bank of the Bhagirathi spending a large sum of money, and began to build on it a temple with nine spires, besides some other small ones subsidiary to it. There was provision as well for a well laid-out garden attached to them. Though the work of the construction continued for about eight years, the whole edifice was not completed even by 1855. So the Rani reflected, "As life is uncertain, the desire of installing the Mother of the universe may not be fulfilled in my lifetime, if it takes such a long time to complete the temple". Resolving in her mind thus, the Rani had the ceremony of the installation of the Mother performed on the 'Snanayatra' day on the 31st May 1855.

Rani's predicament :

Either because of the Divine commandment she received from the Goddess herself or out of a natural hankering of her heart, there arose a great eagerness in the mind of the Rani to offer cooked food daily to the Mother. The Rani thought, "Temples and other building have been built to my liking. I am going to dedicate property sufficient for carrying on the service regularly. But, in spite of doing so, if I cannot serve Her to my heart's content and offer her cooked food daily, everything will be in vain". The Rani saw that her status in the caste scale and the scriptural prohibitions connected with it, were what stood as the main obstacles in the way of her arranging for cooked food offerings. Her own heart, however, never doubted that the Mother of the universe would accept her offering of cooked food. The Rani had the written opinions of Pandits brought from various places. But none of them was to her liking. One day a ruling came from Ramkumar's Chatushpathi at Jhamapukur, which read, "If the Rani makes a gift of the property to a Brahmana and then installs the Goddess in the temple and makes arrangements for the offering of cooked food, there will be no violation of the injunctions of the scriptures. The Brahmanas and other high castes will not then incur blemish if they take Prasada in the temple."

Procuring a priest for the Temple of Mother Kali

Hopes revived in the Rani's heart. She decided to consecrate the temple in the name of her Guru and, with his permission, take the position of an officer for superintending his property and the service in his temple. Afterwards the Rani informed other Pandits of her intentions of following the scriptural prescriptions given by Ramkumar. A Brahmana Maheshchandra Chattopadhyaya served in the estate of the Rani and had also been for a long time acquainted with Ramkumar. His attention was drawn to Ramkumar for solving the problem of procuring a priest for the temple of Mother Kali. He asked the Rani to invite and request Ramkumar to accept the office of the priest for the day of the installation at least and to perform all the rites on the day. The Rani had already a high opinion of Ramkumar's fitness, as she had got the favourable scriptural prescription from him. So she was much delighted at the prospect of him officiating as the priest and sent him an invitation with great humility. "I am now ready to install the Mother of the universe on the strength of your prescription," she wrote, "and have also arranged everything in order to perform that ceremony at an auspicious moment on the day of the coming Snanayatra. We have got a priest for Radha-Govinda. But no suitable Brahmana is coming forward to officiate as the priest of the Mother Kali and help me in the act of Her installation. Therefore, please make any arrangement that may seem possible to you and deliver me from this predicament. As you are a good scholar well-versed in the scripture, it is needless for me to tell you that anyone and everyone cannot be appointed to officiate as the priest".

Mahesh himself went to Ramkumar with the letter conveying the request, explained the situation to him in various ways and prevailed upon him to agree to officiate as the priest until a suitable one was available. It was without any pecuniary considerations that devout Ramkumar at first came to Dakshineswar. His only idea was that the installation of the universal Mother should take place without a hitch. Then at the humble request of

the Rani and Mathur Babu, he lived there for the rest of his life, as he saw that there was no other suitable priest available. Thus the Rani got Ramkumar to officiate as the priest in an unexpected way. She had the installation of the divine Mother performed with great pomp in this new temple on Thursday, 31st May 1855, the day of the Snanayatra. On that occasion, the temple was continuously filled day and night with the noise and bustle of feasts and festivities. The Rani spent money unstintedly and did her best to make all the guests and others as happy as herself. At the end of the worship, Ramkumar joyfully partook the cooked food offered to the Mother of the universe. But, although Sri Ramakrishna joined the joyous festivities whole-heartedly, he acted according to his strict principle regarding food. He bought from the neighbouring market a pice worth of fried rice at the approach of the evening and partook of it before he walked back to the school at Jhamapukur for his rest at night.

Sri Ramakrishna's later responses on the Dakshineswar Kali Temple

Sri Ramakrishna responded on many occasions about the founding of the Dakshineswar Kali Temple by Rasmani. He used to say:

Rani Rasmani made ready to go to Varanasi, the abode of Visvanatha and Annapurna. She fixed a day for starting and had about a hundred small and big boats laden with various articles at the Ghat. She got a prohibitory instruction from the Goddess on the night immediately before the day of starting and gave up that resolve. She then engaged herself in searching for a fit plot of land to build the temple.

He said further: "Under the conviction that 'the western bank of the Ganga is comparable to Varanasi', she at first searched for a piece of land in villages like Bali and Uttarpara on the western bank of the Ganga but failed to get one. For although the Rani was ready to pay a vast amount of money, the famous landlords of those places said that they would not come to the Ganga down a Ghat constructed at the cost of anyone else at any place in their possession. Therefore, the Rani was compelled at last to buy this spot on the eastern bank of the Ganga."

Furthermore, Sri Ramakrishna said,

"A part of the piece of land selected by the Rani at Dakshineswar belonged to an Englishman. In the other part at of the land there was a Muslim graveyard, associated with the memory of a holy man. The piece of land had the shape of the back of a tortoise. Such a graveyard according to the Tantras is very commendable for the installation of Sakti and for Her Sadhana. Therefore, as if guided by Providence, the Rani chose this piece of land"

Sri Ramakrishna also explained why the Rani installed the Mother of the universe on the Snanayatra day, a day of the festival connected with Vishnu, instead of any other day auspicious for the installation of Sakti: "The Rani practised severe austerities according to the scriptures from the day on which the making of the image began: she bathed three times a day, took simple food, lay on the floor and practised Japa, worship, etc. according to her capacity. After the temple was built and the image made, there was delay in fixing an auspicious day for the installation owing to the leisurely ways of people. In the meantime the image was kept packed in a box lest it should be damaged. But it suddenly perspired for some reason or other and the Rani received the following command in a dream, 'How long will you keep Me confined in this way? I feel suffocated; install Me as soon as possible'. No sooner had she got that command than the Rani became flurried and had the almanac consulted for an auspicious day. But, as no such day could be found before the Snana-yatra, she resolved to perform the installation on that day."

Early the next morning, Sri Ramakrishna came to Dakshineswar either to enquire about his brother or to witness, out of curiosity, the ceremonies that were left over from the previous day. He remained there for some time when he saw that there was no probability of his brother's returning to Jhamapukur that day. Therefore, although requested by his brother to stay there for the day, he did not obey him, but returned to Jhamapukur for taking his food. Sri Ramakrishna did not go to Dakshineswar for about a week after that. He was staying at Jhamapukur thinking that his brother would return there in due course after finishing the ceremonies at Dakshineswar. But when Ramkumar did not return even

after a week, he grew anxious and came to Dakshineswar again to get news of his brother. He then came to know that Ramkumar had agreed to assume permanent charge of the worship of the Divine Mother at the pressing request of the Rani.

Sri Ramakrishna could not be made to agree to take Prasada in the temple in spite of Ramkumar's loving persuasion, "It is a temple and the food is cooked with the water of the Ganga; besides, it has been offered to the Mother of the universe; it will not be reprehensible for you to take it". But these words did not appeal to Sri Ramakrishna. So Ramkumar said, "Then take uncooked provisions from the temple store, cook them with your own hands on the sands of the Ganga under the Panchavati and have your meal. Don't you accept that the Ganga purifies everything on its banks and bed?" Sri Ramakrishna's strict principles regarding food had now to yield to his devotion to the Ganga. His faith and devotion accomplished what Ramkumar, well versed in the Sastras, could not do with the help of so much reasoning. Sri Ramakrishna agreed, and continued to stay at Dakshineswar and take his daily meal prepared by himself in the way suggested by Ramkumar.

Deep devotion to the River Ganga

Sri Ramakrishna had a deep devotion to the Ganga. He used to call the water of the Ganga, Brahmagvari, that is, Brahman in the form of water. He said, "Any person living on either bank of the Ganga has his heart changed into one like that of the gods, and virtues manifest therein of themselves. The wind filled with the sacred particles of the water of the Ganga purifies the land on both sides as far as it blows. By the grace of the Bhagirathi, the daughter of the Great Mountain, goodness, austerity, generosity, devotion to God and spiritual steadfastness are always manifesting in the lives of the people living in those parts of the land". If anybody talked of worldly things for a long time or mixed with worldly people, Sri Ramakrishna would ask him to drink a little of the water of the Ganga. If a man, averse to God and attached to worldliness, sat in any part of the sacred abode of the Divine Mother and polluted it by worldly thoughts, he would sprinkle

there the water of the Ganga. He felt much pained if he saw anybody cleaning himself with that water after answering the calls of nature.

Dakshineswar: a second Kamapukur to Sri Ramakrishna

Within a few days the impact of many factors in his new environment brought about a transformation in Sri Ramakrishna's mind. There was the situation of the temple on the banks of the imposing Ganga. There were those beautiful gardens filled with the chirping of birds. There was the divine service performed by devout Sadhakas in the spacious temple. There was the genuine affection of his elder brother who was verily like a father to him. And there was also the touch of the faith and devotion of Rani Rasmani and her son-in-law Mathur Babu on everything in the place. All these were experiences that conspired to endear Dakshineswar to him and make it a second Kamapukur in his eyes. He continued to cook his daily food himself for some time but he lived there with a cheerful mind and discarded the attitude of uncertainty regarding his future duty.

Source:

Sri Ramakrishna: The Great Master Vol. I by Swami Saradananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, India, pp. 126-144.

Shiva, Himalaya and Ganga

"He had a surpassing love for Mahadeva and once he said of the Indian women of the future that if, amidst their new tasks, they would only remember now and then to say "Shiva! Shiva!" it would be worship enough. The very air of the Himalayas was charged for him with the image of that "eternal meditation" that no thought of pleasure could break. And he understood, he said, for the first time this summer, the meaning of the nature-story that made the Ganges fall on the head of the great God and wander in and out amongst His matted locks before She found an outlet on the plains below. He had searched long, he said, for the words that the rivers and waterfalls uttered, amongst the mountains, before he had realized that it was the eternal cry "Bom! Bom! Hara! Hara!"

"Yes!" he said of Shiva one day, "He is the great God—

calm, beautiful and silent! And I am His great worshipper".

From the Notes of some wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda by Sister Nivedita.

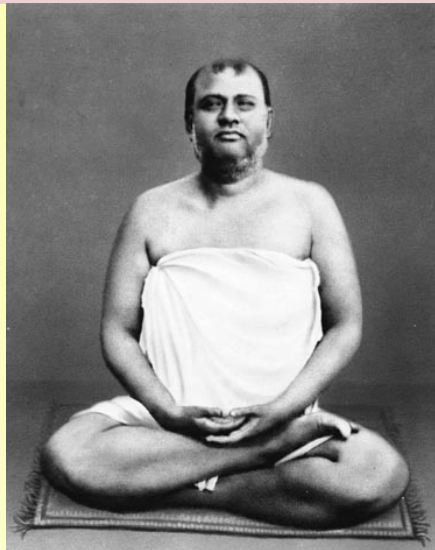
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Towards the end

Sri Ramakrishna had made a prediction about Brahmananda to his close disciples, "When Rakhal knows his real nature, his body will not last anymore". The Master never told Rakhal about this vision, and he forbade his disciples to reveal it as well. About 1910, when Saradananda was publishing *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lilaprasanga* (Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master) in Bengali, Premananda went to visit him in Udbodhan. Saradananda read to Premananda from his manuscript about the Master's vision concerning Maharaj. Startled, Premananda said, "Sharat, what have you done? Maharaj is still living. Don't you remember what the Master said, 'When Rakhal knows his real nature, his body will not last anymore' ". Immediately Saradananda removed that part from his manuscript and also called back the proof from the press and destroyed it.

One night, while Maharaj was living at Balaram's, he suddenly had a vision of Sri Ramakrishna. The Master appeared before Maharaj and disappeared without saying anything. Brahmananda sat on his bed and tried to understand the meaning of that vision. He then said to his attendant, "Suddenly my sleep broke, and I saw the Master standing near my bed. He didn't say a single word. I couldn't figure out the cause of his sudden appearance and disappearance." Pausing a little he gravely said, "I have no desire in my mind. I don't even have the desire to chant his name – only to surrender and surrender."

On the 1st of January 1921, while Maharaj was in Balaram's house, Ramlal, Sri Ramakrishna's nephew, came from Dakshineswar to see him. Immediately Maharaj became jubilant. Ramlal was very dear to him and reminded him of his days at Dakshineswar. Maharaj would tease Ramlal since he was very simple and guileless. Maharaj said to him, "Brother, you will have to dress this evening as a gypsy woman and sing the songs that the Master used to sing". Ramlal shyly replied, "Maharaj, it is not the monastery. It is a devotee's house; moreover, people may misunderstand me, especially women." But when



Swami Brahmananda
(1863 -1922)
(One who enjoys the bliss of the Supreme Reality, Brahman)

Maharaj insisted, Ramlal agreed.

In the evening Maharaj's attendants borrowed ladies' garments and jewellery from Balaram's family and decorated Ramlal. Maharaj sat on his chair in the big hall; the disciples and devotees sat around him, and the ladies watched from the veranda. As soon as Ramlal entered the hall the audience smiled. He began to sing and dance, twisting his waist and gesturing with his hands before Maharaj. This is part of that song:

O Lord of Vraja [Krishna is the Lord of Vraja; Vraja refers to his childhood haunt, Vrindaban], let us go to Vraja for a few days.

If you like that place, stay there or return quickly.

Previously you were a cowherd, and now you have become a king etc.

When Ramlal repeated the last line, Maharaj's smiling face turned grave. That first line had reminded him of his real nature, and immediately the whole atmosphere changed. He realized what Sri Ramakrishna had seen in a vision long ago about his true nature. He also understood why the Master had silently appeared before him. Maharaj began to prepare himself for his final journey, thus fulfilling his unfinished mission.

On the 19th of January 1921, Maharaj left for Varanasi with Saradananda to settle an organizational problem, and then returned to Belur Math on the 16th of March. Later he left for

Bhubaneswar with Shivananda on the 1st of April and afterwards went to Madras on the 25th of April. This was his last visit to South India. He initiated many people, inspired the monks, and solidified the activities of the Order there. Then in November he returned to Bhubaneswar and went to Belur Math on the 12th of January 1922. He attended Sri Ramakrishna's birthday celebration at Belur Math on the 28th of February, and initiated three monks into sannyasa. Then one day he said to a monk, "Today I shall initiate devotees. Call all who want initiation". His attendant Baradananda remarked, "He never speaks that way. Is he going to give up his body?" Another day he said to one of his brother disciples, "I am now relinquishing my responsibilities. Please take care of everything".

On the 22nd of March Brahmananda left Belur Math for Balaram's house. Before departing he carefully studied the plan for the Master's temple that had been made under Swamiji's direction and reminded the monks that it was their duty to complete the project. On the 24th of March, Maharaj contracted cholera at Balaram's and all the best physicians of Kolkata attended on him. He recovered from cholera within a week, but his diabetes (which started in 1918) now took a serious turn. All kinds of treatment - allopathic, homeopathic, and ayurvedic - were administered to him, but to no avail.

He told his attendants, "Take me to Bhubaneswar. If I drink the well - water from there, I shall be all right. I don't care for this polluted air of Kolkata. The air of Bhubaneswar is clean - take me there." One attendant said to him, "Maharaj, you are too weak at present".

When Kaviraj Shyamdas, a noted ayurvedic physician, came to see Brahmananda, he wore a religious mark, *vibhuti*, on his forehead. Observing it Maharaj remarked, "Sir, the mark of Shiva, which is on your forehead, signifies that Shiva alone is real, everything else is unreal". M. visited Maharaj and asked him if he had any pain. Maharaj calmly replied, "Pain takes to its wings when I think how joyfully I passed each day with the Master".

On Saturday, the 8th of April, the burning sensation in his body and his

thirst for water increased. At noon, seeing the ladies at Balaram's family crying, Maharaj said to them, "Why are you so afraid? I bless you all." In the evening Dr Ghosh came and inquired about his discomfort. Maharaj answered with a line from *Vivekachudamani*, "To endure all kinds of afflictions without caring to redress them" – this is my present condition" (verse 24). All of a sudden his face glowed and he became absorbed in deep meditation.

At 9 p.m. he touched the hand of his attendant, who was seated nearby, and blessed him saying, "Don't be afraid, my son. You have served me well. Be absorbed in God. I bless you – you will attain the knowledge of Brahman. I say you will attain the knowledge of Brahman". After a while he blessed other monastic attendants, "Never forget God, and you will realize the highest good. Do not grieve. I shall be with you always". Then he inquired about Saradananda, who would stay the whole day with Maharaj and at night would return to Udbodhan. A monk immediately ran to Udbodhan to bring Saradananda.

A deep silence pervaded the room. The monks and devotees encircling Maharaj were anxious. He opened his eyes again and began to speak, "I am floating on the banyan leaf of faith in the ocean of Brahman. Vivek – my Vivek – Vivekananda – dada (brother)! Baburam-da, Baburam-da (Pemananda)! Jogen – Jogen (Yogananda)! I see the feet of Sri Ramakrishna!" Thus he was seeing and addressing the deceased disciples of the Master.

In the meantime Saradananda arrived. Seeing him Maharaj said, "Brother Sharat, you have come. My knowledge of Brahman and Vedanta are getting mixed up. You are a knower of Brahman, please tell me about it". "My goodness!" replied Saradananda, "You are full of that knowledge. The Master gave you everything".

Then Maharaj said, "The Master is real and so is his *Lila* (divine play). I have almost reached Brahman – only a little veil is left". He wanted to drink a little lemonade and then said with a smile, "Look, what is this? I am saying Brahman, Brahman, and again lemonade, lemonade!" He continued, "Father in Heaven – look, this is a wonderful idea. It is also a path of God".

When Saradananda suggested that he

sleep after drinking little lemonade, Maharaj said, "My mind is in the realm of Brahman. All right, pour lemonade into Brahman!" After sipping a little he said, "Aha-ha, Brahman – the Reality – the vast ocean! Salutations to the Supreme Brahman. Salutations to the Supreme Atman". When Maharaj described his experience of Brahman, all felt peace and serenity in their hearts.

He slowly calmed down. His face was glowing with joy and he gazed without blinking as if he were meditating, or seeing something. After a while he exclaimed in his sweet voice: "Ah, here is the full moon – Ramakrishna! I want the Krishna of Ramakrishna. I am the cowherd boy of Vrindaban. Put anklets on my feet. I want to dance holding the hand of my Krishna. *Jhum – Jhum – Jhum!* (It refers to the sound of the anklets.) Krishna, Krishna, Krishna has come. Can't you see him? You don't have the eyes. Aha – ha, how beautiful! My Krishna – on the lotus – of Vrindaban! It is not sad – Krishna. My play is over. Look, the child Krishna is caressing me. He is calling me to come away with him. I am coming...Om Vishnu, Om Vishnu, and Om Vishnu!

Maharaj greeted Shivananda and Abhedananda who came to see him. Saradananda later said, "This time we shall not be able to keep Maharaj anymore. His vision of Krishna on the lotus, which the Master forbade us to disclose to him, has come out from his own lips."

The doctors expected him to fall into a coma, but he was fully conscious until the end. Boshi Sen wrote in his memoirs, "A hour before he gave up his body, he ceased speaking and seemed to have withdrawn to some distant realm beyond the reach of any of us. I was very gently stroking his palm and wondering whether he still remembered that old playful pressure of his thumb. At the same instant I felt it, light but unmistakable, Maharaj's last bequest to me".

Ramakrishna's prophecy about his spiritual son Rakhal proved to be true. At 8.45 p.m. on Monday, the 10th of April 1922, Swami Brahmananda passed away. The next day his body was carried from Kolkata to Belur Math and cremated on the bank of the Ganges. Later a temple was built at that spot.

The monks and devotees lost their

spiritual teacher, but they preserved some of his precious verbal testimonies in their records. Once in Belur Math a young monk asked Brahmananda, "Maharaj, does Sri Ramakrishna exist even now?" Maharaj answered, "I see you have lost your mind. Having renounced hearth and home, why are we leading such a life? He exists always. Pray to him day and night for his vision. He will dispel all your doubts and will make you understand his true nature."

"Do you see the Master nowadays?"

"Yes," replied Maharaj, "I see him whenever he shows himself out of his mercy. Anyone who has his grace can see him. But how many people have that love and longing to see him?"

Source:

God Lived with Them: Life stories of Sixteen Monastic Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna by Swami Chetananda, Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, pp. 124-128.

(continued from page no. 7)

spoke of Swami Vivekananda's broad and expansive view of Humanism – secular yet anchored in spirituality.

In the **second session**, **Abhijit Hore** discussed the topic of weather the contemporary global crisis is economic or attitudinal. He asked the audience to guard against the tendency to externalise blame and rather look within oneself to check the endless desires and constant yearning for competition and conflict. **Keerthi Monnay** shared her views on implementing Swami Vivekananda's concept of Service. She developed an eloquent logic of how and why Karma-Yoga can act as a moral compass in our everyday lives regardless of profession. **Smit Bhatt** spoke passionately about the need to strive for greater gender equality and emancipation of women with a nuanced understanding of how each one of us can contribute in context of modern Australian society. **Abhishek Jambur** analysed some major issues addressed by Swami Vivekananda – fundamentalism, inequity, drop in spirituality, racism – bringing out a strong message of hope behind the seemingly worrying developments in recent times on these matters. Finally, **Patricia Anne Jackson** enlightened the audience on Swami Vivekananda's quest for and the transformation of America – why and how – including some surprising modern echoes of work done many decades ago. This session was ably conducted by **Mr. Niranjan Deodhar**.