



Issue 43

April 2018

Reach

Newsletter of the Vedanta Centres of Australia

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SAYINGS AND TEACHINGS

Sri Ramakrishna: Directed Towards God

The magnetic needle always points to the North, and hence it is that the sailing vessel does not lose her direction. So long as the heart of man is directed towards God, he cannot be lost in the ocean of worldliness.

Source: *Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; (Kolkata: The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 2013), 3-4.

Sri Sarada Devi: Transitoriness of the World

The happiness of the world is transitory. The less you become attached to the world, the more you enjoy peace of mind.

Source: *Teachings of Sri Sarada Devi, The Holy Mother* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1982), 25

Swami Vivekananda: Education

To me the very essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collecting of facts. If I had to do my education over again, and had any voice in the matter, I would not study facts at all. I would develop the power of concentration and detachment, and then with a perfect instrument I could collect facts at will. Side by side, in the child, should be developed the power of concentration and detachment.

Source: *Teachings of Swami Vivekananda* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2006), 75.

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We welcome you all to the Vedanta Movement in Australia, as epitomized in the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda, and invite you to involve yourselves and actively participate in the propagation of the Universal Message of Vedanta.

1. NEWS FROM AUSTRALIAN CENTRES 11 DECEMBER 2017 TO 10 MARCH 2018

ADELAIDE

506 Glynburn Road, Burnside, SA 5066

Email: vedanta.adelaide@gmail.com

Contact: Dr Raman Sharma on (08) 8431 9775

Mrs Pathma Iswaran on (08) 8379 5336

URL: <http://vedantaadelaide.org>

Daily Activities:

- The Centre is open every evening from 6:45pm for *aratrikam* starting at 7:00pm which is undertaken by the local devotees.

Regular Activities:

- Swami Sridharananda visited the Centre and delivered discourses on the *Srimad-Bhagavad Gitā* for three days in December 2017 and February 2018. A dedicated group of devotees attended his talks. These talks were also recorded.
- Reading of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, including discussion on relevant points, was held on the first and third Sunday of the month.
- Some devotees have been providing community-based support on a weekly basis at the Centre for meeting the educational needs of children from under-privileged backgrounds.

Celebrations

- The Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi's birthday was celebrated on Saturday, 16 December 2017 from 8:30am to 1:00pm. The celebration in-

cluded chanting, *bhajans* and reading from *The Gospel of the Holy Mother* by the devotees while Br. Swatmachaitanya (Harshal) performed the *dashopachar puja*. Swami Sridharananda spoke on the 'Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi: Who is She?'. The program concluded with *bhog* (offering of food to the Divine Trinity), *pushpanjali* and distribution of *prasad*. The evening *aratrikam* was attended by many devotees who sang *bhajans* and offered *pushpanjali*.

BRISBANE

12 Greenwood Street, Springfield Lakes, QLD 4300

Email: info@vedantabrisbane.org

Contact: Swami Atmeshananda (07) 3818 9986

URL: <http://vedantabrisbane.org>

Daily Activities:

- Meditation and the chanting of hymns were conducted between 6:15 am and 7:15 am on all days except Sundays when it is held from 8 am. to 8:30 am.
- Vesper service (aratrikam)*, *bhajans*, and readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* were held between 7:00 pm and 8:00 pm.
- Members were encouraged to visit the Centre and discuss topics concerning spiritual life.

Regular Activities:

- Sunday mornings:- a) *Yoga class* (8:30am—9:45 am). b) *Srimad-Bhagavad Gitā Class* (10:00 am—11:00 am). (c) *Bala Sangha or children's classes* (10:00 am—11:00 am during school term).
- A discussion group met on the first Monday of the month at Sunnybank Hills (7:00 pm — 8:30 pm).
- Sanskrit classes were held every Tuesday (6:00 pm — 7:00 pm).
- Religious classes were held every Wednesday at West End Primary School for children (3:00 pm — 4:00 pm).
- Classes on *Meditation and Spiritual Life* (7:00 pm — 8:00 pm at 134 Fleming Rd, Chapel Hill, Qld 4069) and the *Ramayana* (7:15 pm — 8:15 pm)



The Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi's birthday Celebration, 16 December 2017

were held on alternate Fridays.

- *Chanting of the Sri Ramanama Sankirtanam* was held fortnightly at the Centre on *ekadashi* days (7:30 pm — 8:15 pm).
- *Prayer meeting (satsangs)* were held on the first Saturday of every month.
- Devotees took turns in decorating and worshipping Sri Ramakrishna's image every week at the Sri Selva Vinayakar temple, South Maclean, Qld.
- Swami Atmeshananda conducted *Vivekachudamani* classes at Toowoomba on the first Thursday of every month.
- Yoga, Meditation and Bushwalk was held on the third weekend of every month at Vedanta Precinct, Vedanta Drive, Springfield lakes.

Other Activities:

- Charis Mullen, Member of Parliament for Jordon (Qld) visited the Vedanta Precinct on the 25 January. She saw the ongoing construction of the ashram building and had a meeting with Swami Atmeshananda and other members.



L-R-Raynuha Sinnathamby, Swami Atmeshananda, Charis Mullen, MP

- Swami Atmeshananda participated in the Gandhi Memorial meeting held on the 30 January at Roma Street Parklands, Brisbane, and recited prayers in memory of the Mahatma.
- Swami Atmeshananda participated in a reception to Mahant Swami Maharaj, the head of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, on 24 February 2018 at the Chandler Theatre, Brisbane.
- Devotees and Swami Atmeshananda participated in a Suicide prevention network meeting



Mahatma Gandhi Memorial

held by Wesley Mission on 22 February 2018. at Indooroopilly Uniting Church.

Celebrations

- The Kalpataru day and birthday of Holy Mother were held at the Indooroopilly Senior citizens' hall on 1 January 2018. *Puja, bhajans*, reading from *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* and *prasad* distribution constituted the programme for the day. A large number of devotees participated in the event.



Kalpataru day and birthday of Holy Mother at the Indooroopilly Senior citizens' hall on 1 January 2018.

- The birthday of Swami Vivekananda (according to Hindu calendar) was conducted at the *ashrama* on 8 January 2018 with *puja*, chanting, *bhajans* and *prasad* distribution.
- *Shivaratri puja* was conducted on 14 February 2018 at the *ashrama* from 6 pm to 9 pm. Devotees chanted hymns, sang *bhajans* and wor-



Swami Vivekananda's worship on 8 January 2018



Shivaratri Puja on 14 February 2018

shipped Lord Shiva.

- The birthday of Sri Ramakrishna (according to Hindu calendar) was conducted at the *ashrama* on 17 February 2018. *Puja*, *homam*, chanting of hymns and singing of *bhajans* and *prasad* distribution formed part of the programme. A large number of devotees attended the programme.

Forthcoming Programmes:

- Sri Ramanavami* will be celebrated on 25 March 2018 with *puja*, singing of *Ramanama Sankirtan* and distribution of *prasad*.
- Birthday of Sri Sankaracharya will be celebrated on 20 April 2018 at the *ashrama*.
- Buddha *purnima* will be celebrated on 29 April 2018 at the *ashrama*.
- A fundraising dance programme in aid of the Centre's building fund will be held at the St. John's College Performing Arts Centre by the Nadananjali school of dance on 31 March 2018.
- The Vedanta Centre has constructed a multi-purpose building housing the monastery, a prayer hall, a multipurpose hall, library, office, a commercial kitchen and amenities at [96, Ve-](#)

[danta Drive](#) (corner Grindelia Drive and Tea Trees Avenue), Springfield Lakes, Qld. The inauguration of this centre will be held from 28 to 30 June 2018. Traditional *pujas* will be held on the 28th and 29th and a multi-faith prayer session and an evening of cultural programmes are planned for the 30th June at the Robelle Domain, Springfield. All the members are hereby invited to participate in these events.



View from the West



View from the South

CANBERRA

17 Bean Crescent, Mckellar, ACT 2617

Email: vedacanberra@gmail.com

Contact: Mr Jaishankar Venkataraman 6258 7612 / 0433 593 860

Regular Activities:

- Swami Sridharananda conducted monthly classes on the *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gitā* at the Belconnen Community Centre, 2 Chandler Street, Belconnen, Canberra. The next Gita talk will be held on 22 April 2018.

MELBOURNE

5-7 Angus Ave, Ringwood East, VIC 3135

Email: vedanta.melb@gmail.com

Contact: Swami Sunishthananda 03 8684 9594

URL <http://www.vedantamelbourne.org/>

Regular Activities:

- The shrine was open from 6:30 am to 1:00 pm and 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm seven days a week.
- Vesper service (*aratrikam*), bhajans, reading from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and meditation were conducted between 7:00 pm and 8:00 pm daily.
- A Children's class was held on Sundays from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm.

Swami Sunishthananda conducts:

- A class on Sundays from 10:00 am to 11:30 am on the *Isavasya Upanishad* followed by an interactive session and guided meditation.
- Chanting, *bhajans* and guided meditation followed by a class on *Narada Bhakti Sutras* on Wednesdays from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm.
- Guided meditation followed by a class on Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* on Fridays from 7:30 pm to 8:45 pm.

Other Activities:

- Swami Sunishthananda was invited as a guest speaker to represent the Hindu faith as a part of the 2018 UN World Interfaith Harmony Week observed by The Interfaith Centre of Melbourne at Deakin Edge, Federation Square, Melbourne, on Saturday, 24 February 2018. The topic of the interfaith discussion was, 'Who and Where Are We in a Changing World?' where the faith leaders spoke on creation stories and the meaning of life in our universe.

Celebrations:

- Christmas eve was celebrated on 24 December 2017. The programme included offerings, singing carols and a talk by Swami Sunishthananda on the 'Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ.'



UN World Interfaith Harmony Week, Federation Square, Melbourne, 24 February 2018.



Christmas Eve

- *Kalpataru Day* was celebrated on 1 January 2018 after the evening vesper service. A talk on the significance of *Kalpataru Day* was delivered by Swami Sunishthananda on the occasion.
- Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary was celebrated on 13 January 2018. The programme included special worship accompanied by *homa*, chanting, *bhajans* and *pushpanjali*. The following day, there was a talk on 'Historical Perspective of Swami Vivekananda's Karma Yoga' by Swami Sunishthananda.
- *Shivaratri* was celebrated on 14 February 2018 after the evening vesper service which included chanting, *abhishekam* and offerings by the devotees.
- Sri Ramakrishna's birth anniversary was celebrated on 17 February 2018. The programme included special worship accompanied by *homa*, chanting, *bhajans* and *pushpanjali*. A talk on 'Ideal Way of Living as per Sri Ramakrishna's Life and Teachings' was delivered by Swami Sunishthananda.



Kalpataru Day in Melbourne



Sri Ramakrishna's Birth Anniversary Celebrations on
17 February 2018

Forthcoming Programme

- Sri Ramanavami will be celebrated on 25 March 2018.
- A spiritual retreat will be conducted on 31 March 2018.
- The Annual Day will be organised on 28 April 2018.
- Buddha Dev's birth anniversary will be observed on 29 April 2018.

PERTH

51 Golf View Street, Yokine, WA 6060

Email: vedantaperth@gmail.com

Contact: Hiren Mukhopadhyay 0411 478 244

Parthiv Parekh 0430 511 699

Daily Activities:

- Vesper service (*aratrikam*), *bhajans*, reading from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* are conducted between 7:00 pm and 8:00 pm.

Regular Activities:

- *Satsangas* were conducted on the first Sunday of every month. The programme included chanting, *Gita dhyanam*, *bhajans*, readings and *prasad* distribution.
- Swami Sridharananda continued to deliver monthly discourses on the *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gitā*.

Other Activities:

- A working bee session was held once every month.
- The Vedanta Multipurpose hall is used about 5 days a week by Prana Yoga which is led by an acclaimed yoga teacher who is a member of Yoga Australia.

Celebrations:

- The Holy Mother, Sri Sarada's birth anniversary was observed on 24 December 2017. The programme included *aratrikam*, *bhajans*, with *prasad* distribution.
- Swami Vivekananda's birthday was celebrated on 8 January 2018. The function included *aratrikam*, *bhajans* and *prasad* distribution.
- There was a special celebration to commemorate Sri Ramakrishna's, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi's and Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversaries in the presence of Swami Sridharananda and Br. Ishwarachaitanya (Sivaram). On 8 March 2018 Swami Sridharananda delivered a talk on the 'Spiritual Significance of Sri Sarada Devi'. On 9 March 2018 a talk on the 'Spiritual Significance of Swami Vivekananda' was delivered by Swami Sridharananda. On 10 March 2018 the public celebration of Sri Ramakrishna's birth anniversary was observed at the centre. The programme included *puja*, *bhajans*, *annabhog*, *aratrikam*, *pushpangali* and *prasad* distribution. There was also a discourse on the 'Spiritual Significance of Sri Ramakrishna' by Swami Sridharananda.

SYDNEY

2 Stewart Street, Ermington, NSW 2115

144A Marsden Road, Ermington, NSW 2115 (Entry)

Email: vedasydney@vedantasydney.org

Contact: 02 8197 7351

URL: www.vedantaaustralia.org

Daily Activities:

- The shrine was open from 6:30 am to 1:00 pm and 4:00 pm to 8:30 pm seven days a week.
- Meditation from 6:30 am to 7:30 am and chanting from 7:30 am to 8:00 am.
- Vesper service (*aratrikam*), *bhajans*, and readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* were conducted from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The times change on special occasions.

Regular Activities:

- Swami Sridharananda conducted his chapter-wise study of the *Srimad-Bhagavad Gitā* on Sundays between 9:30 am and 10:30 am.
- Swami Sridharananda conducts a class on the *Mundaka Upanishad* on Mondays from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm.
- A Class for Mothers was held every Monday between 11:00 am and 12:30 pm. Swami Mahabodhananda initiated discussion on *Meditation and Spiritual Life*.
- Swami Mahabodhananda conducts a class on the *Evolution of the Spiritual Ideas in India*, based on the transcripts of Swami Sridharananda's lectures on Fridays from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm.
- *Bala sangha classes* which include moral and spiritual lessons, drama and movement were conducted for children every Saturday between 4:45 pm and 6:45 pm during the school term.
- Parlour talks were conducted by Swami Sridharananda at 1/98 Condamine Street, Balgowlah, NSW 2093, near Manly Beach on Tuesdays between 7:30 pm and 8:30 pm once a month.
- *Sri Rāmanāma Sankirtanam* was conducted on *ekadashi* days after the vesper service.
- Devotees also received spiritual counselling and guidance.



Celebration of Holy Mother's Birth Anniversary on 24 December 2017



The Shrine where Swami Vivekananda's Birth Anniversary was celebrated on 8 January 2018



Sri Ramakrishna's Birth Anniversary

- 'Yoga for Everybody' was conducted by qualified Yoga Teachers on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

Celebrations:

- Christmas Eve was celebrated at the Vedanta Centre of Sydney after the *aratrikam* on 24 December 2017. The programme included *aratrikam* to Christ, carols, and a talk on Christ's nativity. *Prasad* was distributed at the end of the service to around 80-90 people.



Christmas Eve at Sydney

- *Kalpataru Day* was observed on 1 January 2018. This was the day when Sri Ramakrishna manifested his Divinity to a number of people. The programme, which began after the evening *aratrikam*, included *bhajans* and a talk by Swami Sridharananda on 'Sri Ramakrishna's Self Revelation'. There were around 180 people who had *prasad*.



Swami Sridharanandaji delivering his talk on
Kalpataru Day

- Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary was observed on 8 January 2018. In the morning the programme included special worship, *homa*, *pushpanjali* and *prasad* distribution. In the evening, *aratrikam* was performed by Brahmachari Swatmachaitanya followed by some *bhajans* and a talk by Swami Mahabodhananda. There were 80 people who attended in the morning and 220 in the evening.



Aratrikam on Swami Vivekananda's Birth Anniversary

- *Sivaratri* was observed at the Vedanta Centre of Sydney on 14 February 2018. The programme included *puja*, *bhajans*, chanting and the devotees all offered *abhishekam*. There were about 100 people who partook of *prasad*.
- Sri Ramakrishna's birth anniversary was celebrated on 17 February 2018. The *puja* in the morning began at around 8:45 am and was



Br. Ishwarachaitanya performing the Shivaratri worship



Br. Swatmachaitanya performing the homa on Sri Ramakrishna's Birth Anniversary

followed by *homa*, *pushpanjali*, *aratrikam*, and *prasad* distribution. In the evening also there was *aratrikam* and some *bhajans* and a talk by Swami Mahabodhananda. In the morning there were 150 people who attended and in the evening also 150 people attended.

Other Activities

- A musical programme was held at the Vedanta Centre of Sydney on 4 February 2018. The programme included a vocal recital by Chitra Nagraj, who was accompanied on tabla by Maharshi Rawal and on violin in Kopathidas Narayandas. This was followed by a sitar recital by R. Nagraj. The programme was well received.



Chitra Nagraj performs at the VCS on 4 February 2018



Devotee at the celebration of Sri Ramakrishna's birth anniversary



R. Nagraj performs at the VCS on 4 February 2018

Forthcoming Programme:

- *Sri Ramanavami* will be celebrated on 25 March 2018 with puja, singing of *Ramanama Sankirtan* and distribution of *prasad*.
- *Buddha purnima* will be celebrated on 29 April 2018 at the ashrama.

2. FEATURE ARTICLES

Faith and Devotion in the Life of Sri Ramakrishna

Rāmanavami, was celebrated on Sunday 25 March 2018, is the sacred birth anniversary of Bhagwān Shri Rāma. Belonging to the Ikshvaku lineage of King Dashratha of Ayodhyā, Shri Rāma's life exemplifies the ideal son, ideal husband and ideal ruler. This auspicious occasion serves as a fitting context to explore the recurrent themes of faith and devotion depicted in the chronology of specific events in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. Kshudiram, Sri Ramakrishna's father, showed deep devotion to Sri Ramachandra, who was worshipped in his family generation after generation. Additionally, Sri Ramakrishna's boyhood pursuits in the Yatra performances give some insight into his spiritual fervour. Moreover, Sri Ramakrishna as a spiritual teacher drew on examples from Shri Ramachandra's life to teach faith and devotion. These specific events will be the focal points in the ensuing discussion.

Kshudiram's Deep Devotion to Sri Ramachandra

There lived a religious-minded Brahmana family of moderate means in the village of Dere. They were of noble descent, observed the customs of pious Hindus and worshipped Sri Ramachandra. Sri Manikram Chattopadhyaya, the head of this family had three sons and a daughter. Of these, the eldest, Kshudiram, was born approximately in 1775 A.D. The Lord had blessed him with noble qualities such as truthfulness, contentment, forgiveness and renunciation. He was tall and stalwart. Kshudiram showed deep devotion to Sri Ramachandra, who was being worshipped in his family generation after generation. He was in the habit of performing Sandhya, along with his other daily observances, after which he would collect flowers for the worship of Raghuvir (Ramachandra). Not until he had finished his worship would he eat anything.

Kshudiram's Faith in God

On one occasion Kshudiram



went to a neighbouring village on business. On his return he became tired and rested beneath a tree. The vast, lonely field and a soft breeze brought repose to his troubled mind and tired body. He felt a strong desire to lie down, and no sooner had he done so than he was overcome by sleep. He then had a dream in which he saw standing before

him his chosen Ideal, Bhagavan Sri Ramachandra, in the guise of a Divine Boy, His body green like the tender blades of Durva grass. Pointing to a particular spot, the boy said, "I have been staying here for a long time without food and without anyone to take care of me. Take me to your house. I have a very strong desire that you should

serve me.” Kshudiram was overcome with emotion and said, paying homage to the Lord again and again, “O Lord, I am without devotion and am very poor. Service befitting you is not possible in my hut, and I shall incur sin, should there be any flaw in it. So why do you make such a difficult request to me?” At this the boy Ramachandra comforted him and said graciously, “Do not be afraid. I shall not take offence at any shortcoming. Take me with you.” Unable to control his feelings at the Lord’s unexpected grace, Kshudiram burst into tears. Just then his dream came to an end. When he woke up, Kshudiram wondered at the strangeness of his dream and thought, “Ah! If only such a good fortune would be mine.” Then suddenly his eyes fell upon the paddy field close by, and at one he recognized it as the very place he had seen in the dream. Out of curiosity he approached the spot, where he saw a beautiful Salagrama stone and a snake with expanded hood guarding it. Eager to possess the stone, he hastened towards it. On reaching it, he found that the snake had disappeared and that the Salagrama was lying at the entrance to its hole. Seeing that the dream had come true, his heart leapt with joy, and he felt no fear of the snake, convinced, as he was that he had received God’s command. Crying out “Glory to Raghuvir!” Kshudiram took the stone in his hands. He carefully examined the marks on it and, with his knowledge of the Sastras, found it to be a Raghuvir Sila (Salagrama). Beside himself

with joy and wonder, he returned home, performed the purificatory ceremony of the Salagrama according to the Sastras, and installing it as the family deity, began to worship it daily. Even before he came upon the Salagrama in this strange manner, Kshudiram had been worshipping Sri Ramachandra, his chosen Deity, every day. He also worshipped daily the goddess Sitala, invoking her in a consecrated pot filled with water. His staunch faith and deep devotion, which were reflected in his countenance, kept him always on a high spiritual plane.

Sri Ramakrishna’s Boyhood Pursuits in the Yatra Performances

Sri Ramakrishna, known as Gadadhar in his childhood, continued going to school for some time every day. But on reaching the age of fourteen, his devotion and desire for spiritual contemplation increased to such an extent that he became convinced that he had no use for any bread-winning education of the type imparted at school. Even from that point, he felt that his life was meant for a higher purpose and that he would have to direct all his energies towards the realization of God. He waited for God’s guidance depending entirely on what Raghuvir might ordain; for with his heart full of love for that Deity, the boy had always looked upon Him as absolutely his own. Even then he did not leave the school altogether. Gadadhar, however, found at last a favourable opportunity to leave the school. One day some friends who

knew his dramatic talent proposed that they should form a party of Yatra players and requested him to take charge of their training. Gadadhar agreed; but knowing that their guardians would raise objections, the boys were at first worried about a suitable place where they could undergo that training. Clever Gadadhar finally selected Manikraja’s mango grove, and it was settled that every day some of them should absent themselves from school to meet there at the appointed time. The plan was immediately put into effect. Upon Gadadhar’s training the boys learned by heart their own parts and songs, and the mango grove became the happy scene of the performances of the plays depicting the lives of Shri Ramachandra and Shri Krishna. All the details of each performance had to be arranged by Gadadhar with the aid of his own imagination, and he himself had to act the parts of the principal characters. The boys, however, were very happy to find their little group working in perfect harmony. It is said that, from time to time, Gadadhar went into ecstasy during these performances.

The First Four Years of Sri Ramakrishna’s Sadhana

Sri Ramakrishna did not rest satisfied with having only the vision of the Divine Mother during the first four years of his Sadhana. His mind was naturally attracted towards Raghuvir, his family Deity, after he had the vision of the Divine Mother when he was in the Bhavamukha. Knowing that with

the help of devotion it was possible to have, like Mahavir, the vision of Ramachandra, he engaged himself in Sadhana, assuming Mahavir's attitude, for the purpose of attaining perfection in the Dasya-bhava. Sri Ramakrishna said that, thinking of Mahavir incessantly at that time, he became so much absorbed that he forgot altogether for some time his separate existence and individuality. "At that time", said Sri Ramakrishna, "I had to walk, take food and do all my actions like Mahavir. I did not do so of my own accord, but the actions so happened of themselves. I tied my cloth round my waist so that it might look like a tail and moved about jumping; I ate nothing but fruits and roots, which again I did not feel inclined to eat when skinned. I spent much of my time on trees and always cried, 'Raghuvir, Raghuvir!' with a deep voice. Both my eyes assumed a restless expression like those of the animals of that species, and strange to say, the lower end of the backbone, lengthened at that time by nearly an inch."

Sri Ramakrishna's Vision of Sita

An extraordinary vision and experience came to pass in the life of Sri Ramakrishna when he practised Dasya-bhakti. He said, "One day at that time I was sitting under the Panchavati – not meditating, merely sitting – when an incomparable, effulgent female figure appeared before me illuminating the whole

place. It was not that figure alone that I saw then, but also the trees and plants of the Panchavati, the Ganga and all other objects. I saw that the figure was that of a woman; for, there were in her no signs of a goddess. But the extraordinary, spirited and solemn expression of that face, manifesting love, sorrow, compassion, and endurance, was not generally seen even in the figures of goddesses. Looking graciously at me, that goddess-woman was advancing from north to south towards me with a slow, grave gait. I wondered who she might be, when a black-faced monkey came suddenly, nobody knew whence, and fell prostrate at her feet and someone within my mind exclaimed, "Sita, Sita who was all sorrow of her life, Sita the daughter of King Janaka, Sita to whom Rama was her very life!" Saying 'Mother' repeatedly, I was then going to fling myself at her feet, when she came quickly and entered this (showing his own body). Overwhelmed with joy and wonder, I lost all consciousness and fell down. Before that, I had had no vision in that manner without meditating or thinking. That was the first vision of its kind. I have been suffering like Sita all my life, perhaps because my first vision with the naked eye was of her – Sita whose life from the start was a bundle of sufferings."

Sri Ramakrishna in Nirvikalpa Consciousness

As a result of Sri Ramakrishna

being established in the plane of Nirvikalpa consciousness, the memory of Non-duality used to be suddenly awakened in him, and his mind would get merged in the Absolute even at the slightest suggestion received from sights and persons coming strictly within the bounds of the plane of duality. This is made clear in the following incidents, which indicate how deep and wide Sri Ramakrishna's non-dual mood was and how his mind had a natural attraction for it. The gardeners found it inconvenient to sow kitchen vegetables in the spacious temple garden at Dakshineswar when it became covered with grass in the rainy season. Therefore, grass cutters were allowed to cut and take away the grass from there. One day, having got permission to take away grass without paying any price for it, an old grass-cutter began to cut grass and bundle it, and was about to take it to the market for sale. Sri Ramakrishna saw that the old man had cut so much grass out of avarice that it was beyond his power to carry or even lift up that load of grass. But the indigent grass-cutter refused to acknowledge it, and in spite of his repeated efforts in various ways to lift that big bundle upon his head, he failed miserably. While looking at it, Sri Ramakrishna was inspired with spiritual emotion and thought, "Ah, the Self, the knowledge infinite, abides within, and yet so much foolishness and ignorance without!" Then exclaiming, "O Rama, inscrutable is Thy play!" he entered into ecstasy.

One day at Dakshineswar Sri Ramakrishna saw a butterfly flying with a tiny stick stuck into its tail. He was at first pained to think that some naughty urchin had done it, but the next moment he was inspired and burst into laughter, saying, "O Rama, Thou hast brought Thyself to this plight!"

Sri Ramakrishna's Analogy of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana

In the following example Sri Ramakrishna explains the role of Maya drawing on the story of Shri Rama:

"Rama, Sita and Lakshmana were going through the forest. The path in the forest was narrow – not even two could go abreast. Rama walked in front with bow in hand; Sita followed; and Lakshmana came after her with bow and arrows. Lakshmana had so much devotion to, and love for, Rama that he had a desire in his mind always to see his form, blue in complexion, like a newly formed cloud. But as Sita was between them, he could not see Rama as they were walking, and so became anxious to see him. The intelligent Sita understood it, and sympathizing with Lakshmana in his sorrow, moved a little to one side and said to him, 'There – see!' It was then that Lakshmana saw to his heart's content the form of Rama, his Chosen Ideal. Similarly, Maya represented by Sita, stands between Jiva and Isvara. Know it for certain that the Jiva who is represented by Lakshmana cannot see God till, feeling sympathy with him, She moves to one side. The moment She bestows Her grace, the Jiva is

blessed with a vision of Narayana, represented by Rama in the example, and he is relieved from all the trials and tribulations of the world."

Sri Ramakrishna's Teaching on Faith and Devotion

The following excerpt highlights a conversation between Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples, with its overarching emphasis on faith and devotion, and took place on a Sunday afternoon in spring in February 1882. In so doing, Sri Ramakrishna drew on the life of Shri Rama to teach the power of faith and devotion. Mahendranath Gupta (M), a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna recorded it in the anthology of the Master's teachings titled *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*.

Sri Ramakrishna responded to a devotee's question about how worldly-minded individuals may be helped.

Sri Ramakrishna acknowledged that help might be rendered and proceeded to advise devotees accordingly evident in the following recording:

Master: From time to time he should live in the company of holy men, and from time to time go into solitude to meditate on God. Furthermore, he should practise discrimination and pray to God, 'Give me faith and devotion.' Once a person has faith he has achieved everything. There is nothing greater than faith.

Master (To Kedar): "You must have heard about the tremendous power of faith. It is said in

the Purāna that Rāma, who was God Himself – the embodiment of Absolute Brahman – had to build a bridge to cross the sea to Ceylon. But Hanumān, trusting in Rāma's name, cleared the sea in one jump and reached the other side. He had no need of a bridge." (*All laugh.*)

"Once a man was about to cross the sea. Bibhishana wrote Rāma's name on a leaf, tied it in a corner of the man's wearing-cloth, and said to him, 'Don't be afraid. Have faith and walk on the water. But look here – the moment you lose faith you will be drowned.' The man was walking easily on the water. Suddenly he had an intense desire to see what was tied in his cloth. He opened it and found only a leaf with the name of Rāma written on it. 'What's this?' he thought. 'Just the name of Rāma!' As soon as doubt entered his mind he sank under the water."

"If a man has faith in God, even if he has committed the most heinous sins – such as killing a cow, a Brāhman, or a woman – he will certainly be saved through his faith. Let him only say to God, 'O Lord, I will not repeat such action', and he need not be afraid of anything."

When he had said this, the Master sang:

If only I can pass away repeating Durgā's name,

How canst Thou then, O Blessed One,

Withhold from me deliverance,

Wretched though I may be?
 I may have stolen a drink of wine, or killed a child unborn,
 Or slain a woman or cow,
 Or even caused a Brahmin's death; But, though it all be true,
 Nothing of this can make me feel the least uneasiness;
 For through the power of Thy sweet name
 My wretched soul may still aspire
 Even to Brahmanhood.

Pointing to Narendra, the Master said, "You all see this boy. He behaves that way here. A naughty boy seems very gentle when with his father. But he is quite another person when he plays in the chāndni. Narendra and people of his type belong to the class of the ever free. They are never entangled in the world. When they grow a little older they feel the awakening of inner consciousness and go directly toward God. They come to the world only to teach others. They never care for anything of the world. They are never attached to 'woman and gold'.

The Vedas speak of the homā bird. It lives high up in the sky and there it lays its eggs. As soon as the egg is laid it begins to fall; but it is so high up that it continues to fall for many days. As it falls it hatches, and the chick falls. As the chick falls its eye opens; it grows wings. As soon as its eyes open, it realises that it is falling and will be dashed to pieces on touching the earth. Then it at once shoots up toward

the mother bird high in the sky."

The following conversation of the Master with his devotees occurred the next day. Sri Ramakrishna was having great fun with the young devotees; now and then he glanced at M. He noticed that M. sat in silence. The Master said to Ramlal, "You see, he is a little advanced in years, and therefore somewhat serious. He sits quiet while the youngsters are making merry." M. was then about twenty eight years old.

The conversation drifted to Hanumān, whose picture hung on the wall in the Master's room.

Sri Ramakrishna said, "Just imagine Hanumān's state of mind. He didn't care for money, honour, creature comforts, or anything else. He longed only for God. When he was running away with the heavenly weapon that had been secreted in the crystal pillar, Mandodari began to tempt him with various fruits so that he might come down and drop the weapon. But he couldn't be tricked so easily. In reply to her persuasion he sang this song:

Am I in need of fruit?

I have the Fruit that makes this life

Fruitful indeed. Within my heart

The Tree of Rāma grows,

Bearing salvation for its fruit.

Under the Wish-fulfilling Tree

Of Rāma do I sit at ease,

Plucking whatever fruit I will.

But if you speak of fruit –

No beggar, I, for common fruit.

Behold, I go,

Leaving a bitter fruit for you.

As Sri Ramakrishna was singing the song he went into Samādhi. Again the half-closed eyes and motionless body that one sees in his photograph. Just a minute before, the devotees had been making merry in his company. Now all eyes were riveted on him. Thus for the second time M. saw the Master in samādhi. After a long time the Master came back to ordinary consciousness. His face lighted up with a smile, and his body relaxed; his senses began to function in a normal way. He shed tears of joy as he repeated the holy name of Rāma. M. wondered whether this saint was the person who a few minutes earlier had been behaving like a child of five.

Source:

Swami Saradananda (A direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna), *Sri Ramakrishna: The Great Master Volume I* (Sri Ramakrishna Math: Mylapore, Chennai) p.24; pp.28-9; pp. 79-80; pp. 182-3; pp. 300-301; p. 557.

Mahendranath Gupta (M) Translated by Swami Nikhilananda, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna Volume I* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai) pp. 87-88; pp. 90-91.

B. DIRECT DISCIPLES: What is Religion?

—Swami Vivekananda

The *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* contain his speeches and writings, as well as numerous epistles written to his brother-disciples, disciples, admirers, and friends. There are his conversations and dialogues with his disciples and intimate associates. One such writing entitled 'What is religion?' serves to highlight Swami Vivekananda's exposé of this perennial question.

The Analogy of the Locomotive and the Worm

A huge locomotive has rushed on over the line and a small worm that was creeping upon one of the rails saved its life by crawling out of the path of the locomotive. Yet this little worm, so insignificant that it can be crushed in a moment, is a living something, while this locomotive, so huge, so immense, is only an engine, a machine. You say that one is life and the other is only dead matter and all its powers and strength and speed are only those of a dead machine, a mechanical contrivance. Yet the poor little worm which moved upon the rail and which the least touch of the engine would have deprived of its life is a majestic being compared to that huge locomotive. It is a small part of the Infinite and, therefore, it is greater than this powerful engine. Why should that be so? How do we know the living from the dead? The machine mechanically performs all the movements its maker made it to perform, its movements are not those of life. How can we make the distinction between the living and the dead, then?

In the living there is freedom, there is intelligence; in the dead all is bound and no freedom is

possible, because there is no intelligence. This freedom that distinguishes us from mere machines is what we are all striving for. To be more free is the goal of all our efforts, for only in perfect freedom can there be perfection. This effort to attain freedom underlies all forms of worship, whether we know it or not.

To Attain Freedom Underlies all Forms of Worship

If we were to examine the various sorts of worship all over the world, we would see that the rudest of mankind are worshipping ghosts, demons, and the spirits of their forefathers – serpent worship, worship of tribal gods, and worship of the departed ones. Why do they do this? Because they feel that in some unknown way these beings are greater, more powerful than themselves, and limit their freedom. They, therefore, seek to propitiate their beings in order to prevent them from molesting them, in other words, to get more freedom. They also seek to win favour from these superior beings, to get by gift of the gods what ought to be earned by personal effort.

In Search of Miracles

On the whole, this shows that the

world is expecting a miracle. This expectation never leaves us, and however we may try, we are all running after the miraculous and extraordinary. What is mind but that ceaseless inquiry into the meaning and mystery of life? We may say that only uncultivated people are going after all these things, but the question still is there: Why should it be so? The Jews were asking for a miracle. The whole world has been asking for the same these thousands of years. There is, again, the universal dissatisfaction. We make an ideal but we have rushed only half the way after it when we make a newer one. We struggle hard to attain to some goal and then discover that we do not want it. This dissatisfaction we are having time after time, and what is there in the mind if there is to be only dissatisfaction? It is because freedom is every man's goal. He seeks it ever, his whole life is a struggle after it. The child rebels against law as soon as it is born. Its first utterance is a cry, a protest against the bondage in which it finds itself. This longing for freedom produces the idea of a Being who is absolutely free. The concept of God is a fundamental element in the human constitution. In the Vedanta, Sat - chit - ananda - (Existence - Knowledge - Bliss) is the highest concept of God possible to the

mind. It is the essence of knowledge and is by its nature the essence of bliss. We have been stifling that inner voice long enough, seeking to follow law and quiet the human nature, but there is that human instinct to rebel against nature's laws. We may not understand what the meaning is, but there is that unconscious struggle of the human with the spiritual, of the lower with the higher mind, and the struggle attempts to preserve one's separate life, what we call our 'individuality'.

Even hell stands out with this miraculous fact that we are born rebels; and the first fact of life – the inrushing of life itself – against this we rebel and cry out, "No law for us." As long as we obey the laws we are like machines, and on goes the universe, and we cannot break it. Laws as laws become man's nature. The first inkling of life on its higher level is in seeing this struggle within us to break the bond of nature and to be free. "Freedom, O Freedom! Freedom, O Freedom!" is the song of the soul. Bondage, alas, to be bound in nature, seems its fate.

Man's Ceaseless Endeavour to Become Free

Why should there be serpent, or ghost, or demon worship and all these various creeds and forms for having miracles? Why do we say that in life, there is being in anything? There must be a meaning in all this search, this endeavour to understand life, to explain being. It is not meaningless and vain. It is man's ceaseless en-

deavour to become free. The knowledge, which we now call science, has been struggling for thousands of years in its attempt to gain freedom, and people ask for freedom. Yet there is no freedom in nature. It is all law. Still the struggle goes on. Nay, the whole of nature from the very sun to the atoms is under law, and even for man there is no freedom. But we cannot believe it. We have been studying laws from the beginning and yet cannot - nay, will not - believe that man is under law. The soul cries ever, "Freedom, O Freedom!" With the conception of God as a perfectly free Being, man cannot rest eternally in this bondage. Higher he must go, and unless the struggle were for himself, he would think it too severe. Man says to himself, "I am a born slave, I am bound; nevertheless there is a Being who is not bound by nature. He is free and Master of nature."

The Embodiment of Freedom is what we call God

The conception of God, therefore, is as essential and as fundamental a part of mind as is the idea of bondage. Both are the outcome of the idea of freedom. There cannot be life, even in the plant, without the idea of freedom. In the plant or in the worm, life has to rise to the individual concept. It is there, unconsciously working, the plant living its life to preserve the variety, principle, or form, not nature. The idea of nature controlling every step onward overrules the idea of freedom. Onward goes the idea of the material world, onward moves the idea of freedom. Still the fight goes on.

We are hearing about all the quarrels of creeds and sects, yet creeds and sects are just and proper, they must be there. The chain is lengthening and naturally the struggle increases, but there need be no quarrels if we only knew that we are all striving to reach the same goal.

The embodiment of freedom, the Master of nature, is what we call God. You cannot deny Him. No, because you cannot move or live without the idea of freedom. Would you come here if you did not believe you were free? It is quite possible that the biologist can and will give some explanation of this perpetual effort to be free. Take all that for granted, still the idea of freedom is there. It is a fact, as much so as the other fact that you cannot apparently get over, the fact of being under nature.

The Antithesis of Bondage and Liberty

Bondage and liberty, light and shadow, good and evil must be there, but the very fact of the bondage shows also this freedom hidden there. If one is a fact, the other is equally a fact. There must be this idea of freedom. While now we cannot see that this idea of bondage, in uncultivated man, is his struggle for freedom, yet the idea of freedom is there. The bondage of sin and impurity in the uncultivated savage is to his consciousness very small, for his nature is only a little higher than the animal's. What he struggles against is the bondage of physical nature, the lack of physical gratification but

out of this lower consciousness grows and broadens the higher conception of a mental or moral bondage and a longing for spiritual freedom. Here we see the divine dimly shining through the evil of ignorance. The veil is very dense at first and the light may be almost obscured, but it is there, ever pure and undimmed – the radiant fire of freedom and perfection. Man personifies this as the Ruler of the Universe, the One Free Being. He does not yet know that the universe is all one, that the difference is only in degree, in the concept.

The Whole of Nature is the Worship of God

The whole of nature is the worship of God. Wherever there is life, there is this search for freedom and that freedom is the same as God. Necessarily this freedom gives us mastery over all nature and is impossible without knowledge. The more we are knowing, the more we are becoming masters of nature. Mastery alone is making us strong and if there be some being entirely free and master of nature, that being must have a perfect knowledge of nature, must be omnipresent and omniscient. Freedom must go hand in hand with these, and that being alone who has acquired these will be beyond nature.

Blessedness, eternal peace, arising from perfect freedom, is the highest concept of religion underlying all the ideas of God in Vedanta – absolutely free Existence, not bound by anything, no change, no nature, nothing that

can produce a change in Him. This same freedom is in you and in me and is the only real freedom.

God is still, established upon His own majestic changeless Self. You and I try to be one with Him, but plant ourselves upon nature, upon the trifles of daily life, on money, on fame, on human love, and on all these changing forms in nature which make for bondage. When nature shines, upon which depends the shining? Upon God and not upon the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars. Wherever anything shines, whether it is the light in the sun or in our own consciousness, it is He. He shining, all shines after Him.

Now we have seen that this God is self-evident, impersonal, omniscient, the Knower and Master of nature, the Lord of all. He is behind all worship and it is being done according to him, whether we know it or not. I go one step further. That, at which all marvel, that which we call evil, is His worship too. This too is a part of freedom. Nay, I will be terrible even and tell you that, when you are doing evil, the impulse behind is also freedom. It may have been misguided and misled, but it was there; and there cannot be any life or any impulse unless that freedom can be behind it. Freedom breathes in the throb of the universe.

Unity Amidst Diversity

Unless there is unity at the universal heart, we cannot understand variety. Such is the conception of the Lord in the Upanishads. Sometimes it rises even

higher, presenting to us an ideal before which at first we stand aghast – that we are in essence one with God. He who is the colouring in the wings of the butterfly, and the blossoming of the rose-bud, is the power that is in the plant and in the butterfly. He who gives us life is the power within us. Out of His fire comes life, and the direst death is also His power. He whose shadow is death, His shadow is immortality also. Take a little higher conception. See how we are flying like hunted hares from all that is terrible, and like them, hiding our heads and thinking we are safe. See how the whole world is flying from everything terrible, and like them, hiding our heads and thinking we are safe. See how the whole world is flying from everything terrible. Once when I was in Varanasi, I was passing through a place where there was a large tank of water on one side and a high wall on the other. It was in these grounds that there were there were many monkeys. The monkeys of Varanasi are huge brutes and are sometime surly. They now took it into their heads not to allow me to pass through their street, as they howled and shrieked and clutched at my feet as I passed. As they pressed closer, I began to run, but the faster I ran, the faster came the monkeys and they began to bite at me. It seemed impossible to escape, but just then I met a stranger who called out to me, "Face the brutes." I turned and faced the monkeys, and they fell back and finally fled. That is a lesson for all life - face the terrible, face it boldly. Like the monkeys, the hardships of life fall back when we cease to flee before

them. If we are ever to gain freedom, it must be by conquering nature, never by running away. Cowards never win victories. We have to fight fear and troubles and ignorance if we expect them to flee before us.

What is Death? What are Terrors?

What is death? What are terrors? Do you not see the Lord's face in them? Fly from evil and terror and misery, and they will follow you. Face them, and they will flee. The whole world worships ease and pleasure, and very few dare to worship that which is painful. To rise above both is the idea of freedom. Unless man passes through this gate he cannot be free. We all have to face these. We strive to worship the Lord, but the body rises between, nature rises between Him and us and blinds our vision. We must learn how to worship and love Him in the thunderbolt, in shame, in sorrow, in sin. All the world has ever been preaching the God of virtue. I preach a God of virtue and a God of sin in one. Take Him if you dare - that is the one way to salvation; then alone will come to us the Truth Ultimate which comes from the idea of oneness. Then will be lost the idea that one is greater than the other. The nearer we approach the law of freedom, the more we shall come under the Lord, and troubles will vanish. Then we shall not differentiate the door of hell from the gate of heaven, nor differentiate between men and say, "I am greater than any being in the universe." Until we see nothing in the world but the Lord Himself, all these evils will

beset us and we shall make all these distinctions; because it is only in the Lord, in the Spirit, that we are all one; and until we see God everywhere, this unity will not exist for us.

Two birds of beautiful plumage, inseparable companions, sat upon the same tree, one on the top and one below. The beautiful bird below was eating the fruits of the tree, sweet and bitter, one moment a sweet one and another a bitter one. The moment he ate a bitter fruit, he was sorry, but after a while he ate another and when it too was bitter, he looked up and saw the other bird who ate neither the sweet nor the bitter, but was calm and majestic, immersed in his own glory. And then the poor lower bird forgot and went on eating the sweet and bitter fruits again, until at last he ate one that was extremely bitter; and then he stopped again and once more looked up at the glorious bird above. Then he came near and nearer to the other bird; and when he had come nearer enough, rays of light shone upon him and enveloped him, and he saw he was transformed into the higher bird. He became calm, majestic, free, and found that there had been but one bird all the time on the tree. The lower bird was but the reflection of the one above. So we are in reality one with the Lord, but the reflection makes us seem many, as when the one sun reflects in a million dew-drops and seems a million tiny suns. The reflection must vanish if we are to identify ourselves with our real nature which is divine. The universe itself can never be the limit of our satisfaction. That is why the mi-

ser gathers more and more, that is why the robber robs, the sinner sins, that is why you are learning philosophy. All have one purpose. There is no other purpose in life, save to reach this freedom. Consciously or unconsciously, we are all striving for perfection. Every being must attain to it.

The man who is groping through sin, through misery, the man who is choosing the path through hells, will reach it, but it will take time. We cannot save him. Some hard knocks on his head will help him to turn to the Lord. The path of virtue, purity, unselfishness, spirituality, becomes known at last and what all are doing unconsciously, we are trying to do consciously. The idea is expressed by St Paul, "The God that ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you." This is the lesson for the whole world to learn. What have these philosophers and theories of nature to do, if not to help us to attain to this one goal in life?

Let us come to that consciousness of the identity of everything and let man see himself in everything. Let us be no more the worshippers of creeds or sects with small limited notions of God, but see Him in everything in the universe. If you are knowers of God, you will everywhere find the same worship as in your own heart.

The Highest Creed is Oneness.

Get rid of, in the first place, all these limited ideas and see God in every person - working through all hands, walking

through all feet, and eating through every mouth. In every being he lives, through all minds He thinks. He is self-evident, nearer unto us than ourselves. To know this, is religion, is faith, and may it please the Lord to give us this faith! When we shall experience that oneness, we shall be immortal. We are physically immortal even, one with the universe. So long as there is one that breathes throughout the universe, I live in that one. I am not this limited little being, I am the universal. I am the life of all the sons of the past. I am the soul of the teachers, and I am all the robbers that robbed, and all the murderers that were hanged, I am the universal. Stand up then; this is the highest worship. You are one with the universe. That only is humility - not crawling upon all fours and calling yourself a sinner. That is the highest evolution when this veil of differentiation is torn off. The highest creed is Oneness. I am so-and-so is a limited idea, not true of the real 'I'. I am the universal; stand upon that and ever worship the Highest through the highest form, for God is Spirit and should be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Through lower forms of worship, man's material thoughts rise to spiritual worship and the Universal Infinite One is at last worshipped and through the spirit. That which is limited is material. The spirit alone is infinite. God is Spirit, is infinite; man is Spirit and, therefore, infinite, and the Infinite alone can worship the Infinite. We will worship the Infinite; that is the highest spiritual worship.

The grandeur of realising these

ideas, how difficult it is! I theorise, talk, philosophise; and the next moment something comes against me, and I unconsciously become angry, I forget there is anything in the universe but this little limited self; I forget to say, "I am the Spirit, what is this trifle to me? I am the Spirit." I forget it is all myself playing, I forget God, I forget freedom.

Sharp as the blade of a razor, long and difficult and hard to cross, is the way to freedom. The sages have declared this again and again. Yet do not let these weaknesses and failures bind you. The Upanishads have declared, "Awake! Awake! And stop not until the goal is reached." We will then certainly cross the path, sharp as it is like the razor, and long and distant and difficult though it may be. Man becomes the master of gods and demons. No one is to blame for our miseries but ourselves. Do you think there is only a dark cup of poison if man goes to look for the nectar? The nectar is there and is for every man who strives to reach it. The Lord Himself tells us, "Give up all these paths and struggles. Do thou take refuge in Me. I will take thee to the other shore, be not afraid." We hear that from all the scriptures of the world that come to us. The same voice teaches us to say, "Thy will be done upon earth, as it is in Heaven," for, "Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory." It is difficult, all very difficult. I say to myself:

This moment I will take refuge in Thee, O Lord. Unto Thy love I will sacrifice all, and on Thine

altar I will place all that is good and virtuous. My sins, my sorrows, my actions, good and evil, I will offer unto Thee; do Thou take them and I will never forget.

One moment I say, "Thy will be done", and the next moment something comes to try me and I spring up in a rage. The goal of all religions is the same, but the language of the teachers differ. The attempt is to kill the false "I", so that the real "I", the Lord, will reign. "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God. Thou shalt have no other Gods before me," says the Hebrew scriptures. God must be there all alone. We must say, "Not I, but Thou," and then we should give up everything but the Lord. He, and He alone, should reign. Perhaps we struggle hard, and yet the next moment our feet slip, and then we try to reach out our hands to Mother. We find we cannot stand alone. Life is infinite, one chapter of which is, "Thy will be done", and unless we realise all the chapters we cannot realise the whole. "Thy will be done" - every moment the traitor mind rebels against it, yet it must be said, again and again, if we are to conquer the lower self. We cannot serve a traitor and yet be saved. There is salvation for all except the traitor and we stand condemned as traitors, traitors against our own selves, against the majesty of Mother, when we refuse to obey the voice of our higher self. Come what will, we must give our bodies and minds up to the Supreme Will.



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