



Reach

Oz Mountain, Growee, NSW

SAYINGS AND TEACHINGS

Sri Ramakrishna on Qualities that Precede the Advent of God

As the dawn heralds the sun, so sincerity, unselfishness, purity and righteousness precede the advent of the Lord.

Source: *Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture; Calcutta; page 6.

Sri Sarada Devi on not Relaxing Spiritual Practices

Everything, no doubt, happens by God's will. Yet, man must work, because God expresses His will through man's action. Do not relax your spiritual practices.

Source: *Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture; Calcutta; page 23.

Swami Vivekananda on Standing on Your Own Feet, Spiritually.

Man is to become divine by realizing the divine. Idols or temples or churches or books are only the supports, the helps, of his spiritual childhood: but on and on he must progress.

Source: *Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture; Calcutta; page 42.

Swami Ramakrishnananda on Religion.

Religion belongs almost wholly to the mind.

Source: Text generated by Google AI, June 4, 2025,

IN THIS ISSUE

1. News from Australian Centres

- ◆ Adelaide
- ◆ Brisbane
- ◆ Canberra
- ◆ Melbourne
- ◆ Perth
- ◆ Sydney

2. Bhakti Yoga: The Need of a Guru and Qualifications of the Aspirant and Teacher

—Swami Vivekananda

3. Dakshineswar Temple Garden

—Russell Atkinson

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 MARCH TO 10 JUNE 2025

ADELAIDE

16 East Terrace, Kensington Gardens, SA 5068

Email: vedanta.adelaide@gmail.com

Contacts: Swami Manyananda +61425762436

Dr Raman Sharma on (08) 8431 9775

URL: <http://vedantaadelaide.org>

Daily Activities

- The Centre functioned from 7:30am-12:30pm and 4:00pm-8:00pm. Aratrikam was performed from 7:00-7:30 pm followed by bhajans, devotional reading and meditation.

Regular Activities

- The Centre observed *ekadasi* with *Ramanama Sankirtana* every lunar fortnight.
- Swami Manyananda conducted a class on the *Vedanta Sara* or 'Fundamentals of Vedanta' every Wednesday from 11:00 am to 12:00 noon.
- Swami Manyananda also conducted a class on the *Bhagavad Gita* on Sundays from 11:00 am.
- Every alternate Saturday, Swami Manyananda read *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* followed by a discussion before the evening *aratrikam*.
- On Sundays Swami Manyananda conducted classes on the *Vivekachudamani* from 5:30pm to 6:30 pm.
- Bala Sangha or spiritual classes for children were held on Sundays from 4pm to 5 pm. It is conducted by Swami Manyananda and volunteers, and includes mantra chanting, meditation, yoga, singing, reading from spiritual texts, value-based lessons and arts and crafts. The programme concludes with refreshments.

Celebrations

- Ramanavami, marking the birth of Lord Rama, was celebrated on Sunday, 6 April 2025. The evening program, following the daily aratrikam, included a short puja, bhajans, *Ramanama Sankirtana*, a short talk on 'The Significance of Ramanavami' by Swami Manyananda, pushpanjali and prasada distribution.



Ramanavami in Adelaide

- Adi Shankaracharya Jayanti was celebrated on Sunday, 4 May 2025. Swami Manyananda gave a talk on 'The Life, Philosophy and Teachings of Adi Shankaracharya'.

BRISBANE

96 Vedanta Drive, (next to 2 Poppy Crescent),
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 6:30 am and 7:15 am.
- Aratrikam, bhajans, and readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* were held between 6:30 pm and 7:15 pm.

Regular Activities

- Sunday mornings:- (a) Yoga class from 8:30 am to 9:45 am. (b) *Srimad-Bhagavad Gitā* Class (10:00 am—11:00 am). (c) Bala sangha and Yuva sangha (10:00 am—11:00 am) during school term as a 4 weekly course). (d) Hindi language classes (fortnightly) from 9:00 am to 10:30 am.

- A class on the *Brahma Sutras* was conducted on Tuesdays from 11 am to 12 noon. In the evening, Yoga classes were conducted from 6:30pm to 7:45 pm.
- On Wednesdays interviews with applicants for prospective lending through NILS (No Interest Loan Scheme) are conducted at the Centre by appointment. People who are doing it tough avail themselves of loans of upto \$2000 repayable through their government payments. This is an initiative of the Wesley Mission's Good Shepherd Organization.
- On Fridays, the Centre's volunteers cooked food at the Centre's soup kitchen for the needy. An average of 325 meals per week is packed into containers and frozen. They are distributed free of cost through the Westside Community Centre, Gales Community Centre and Serving Our People (SOP). Many needy people come to the Centre and avail themselves of the free meals as well.
- Every Friday the Centre's food bank distributed groceries to the needy. An average of 10 families per week receive grocery hampers along with cooked food and free bread.
- The Maa Sarada's kitchen prepares and sells food at a reasonable cost to people on Saturdays. On an average, about 120 persons avail themselves of this service. The kitchen is efficiently managed by volunteers.
- On Saturdays a Justice of the Peace (JP) is available at the Centre from 10 am to 11 am.
- Monthly on Thursdays there was a study of the *Vivekachudamani*, online, from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm organized by Shakti Global, Gold Coast.
- On the last Saturday of every month, the Vedanta group on the Gold Coast studied the *Bhagavad Gita* from 5.30pm to 6.30pm
- Chanting of the *Ramanama Sankirtana* was held fortnightly at the Centre on *ekadashi* days (7:00 pm — 8:00 pm).
- Swami Atmeshananda conducted *Vivekachudamani* classes for the Vedanta Group at Toowoomba on the first Wednesday of every month (6.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.) at the Toowoomba Council Library .
- A class on the *Ashtavakra Gita* was conducted at 101 Sharpless Drive, Springfield Lakes, on a fixed day of the month.
- Devotees took turns in decorating and worshipping Sri Ramakrishna's image every week at the Sri Selva Vinayakar temple, South Maclean, Qld.
- The Centre, in association with the Namdhari Sikh Association, conducted 'Kirtan and Langar' on the last Sunday of every month. After meditation and singing of kirtans, the Sikh brethren cooked and served delicious meals to anyone who could come and partake of it.

Celebrations

- Ramanavami was observed on 6 April 2025 by singing the *Ramanama Sankirtana* and devotees taking part of prasad.
- The birth anniversary of Adi Shankaracharya was celebrated on 4 May 2025. Swami Mahabodhananda gave a talk on the 'Life and Teachings of Adi Shankaracharya.
- The birth anniversary of Buddha was celebrated on 11 May 2025. Devotees chanted from the Dhammapada and sang other hymns. Swami Mahabodhananda gave a talk on the Buddha.

Other Activities

- Harmony Day 2025 was celebrated by the Centre with: a) A multifaith panel which discussed 'harmony' which included Uncle Glenn Barry (Indigenous); Denis Bartrum (Interfaith Minister); Dr Arsalan Farhati (Nematollah Sufi Order), Ibraheem Malik (Ahmadiyya Muslim Association); Dr Abbas Muhajer (Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais, City of Brisbane); Margaret Naylor, (Queensland Faith



Harmony Day Community Leaders in Brisbane



Harmony Day Multifaith Representatives in Brisbane



Queensland Faith Communities Council representatives at the Annual Faith Service for the Legal Profession and the Judiciary

Communities Council); Mrs Gail Paratz, (Chair of QFCC and representative of the Jewish community); Mokhtair Singh (Gold Coast Sikh Association); Ven. Geshe Tsultrim (Chenrezig Institute); Linda Ward (Celtic Pagan Elder and member of Pagan Hearth Inc, South East QLD); b) A panel discussion by prominent members of the community, including David Paratz (Member of the QCAT and member of the Order of Australia for services to the Jewish Community); Hon Shane Neumann (Federal MP); Hon Milton Dick (Federal MP); Charis Mullen (State MP); Councillor Pye Augustine (representing Mayor Harding); Councillor Paul Tully; Sampada Kotha (youth representative); c) Bharata Natyam (Ashwini Nandakumar); Kathak (Sama School of Kathak); Live music (PanAlchemy band). There were also two workshops - one by Uncle Glenn Barry (indigenous artist); African drumming workshop (Tsoof Baras).

- Swami Atmeshananda was invited by the Queensland Faith Communities Council to officiate at the Annual Faith Service for the Legal Profession and the Judiciary on 30 April 2025. He presented a universal prayer of Hinduism. This was organised at the St John's Anglican Cathedral, Brisbane.
- The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Centre was held on 11 May 2025. New members of the Management Committee were elected and the Financial Accounts was presented by Swami Atmeshananda.
- Students from the All Hallows Girls School (first girls' school established in Queensland in 1861) visited the Centre with their teachers. On the occasion, they donated some groceries for



Ashim Majumdar at the AGM in Brisbane



Students from the All Hallows Girls School in Brisbane

the Food Bank. Swami Atmeshananda gave a short talk about the significance of the Vedanta movement and led them through a guided meditation session. Students engaged a lively question and answer session.

Forthcoming Programmes

- International Yoga Day will be observed on 21 June 2025 consisting of yoga asanas, pranayama, talk on Wellness (Ayurveda perspective)
- A flute Concert, by Subrahmanya Shastry, will be held on 29 June 2025 followed by a Bharata Natyam presentation by Gayathri Vijay and students. Langar will be served after the programme.
- Guru Purnima celebration will be held on 10 July 2025 from 6.30 to 8.30 p.m.
- Sri Krishna Janmashtami will be observed on 16 August 2025.

Email: vedacanberra@gmail.com

Contact: Mr Jaishankar Venkataraman 02 6258 7612 /0433

CANBERRA

4 Brigalow St, O'Connor ACT 2602

593860

Daily Activities

- Evening aratrikam and prayers are conducted every evening at the centre.

Regular Activities

- Swami Sridharananda conducted his monthly class on the Mundaka Upanishad on 22 March 2025. Regular talks on the Mundaka Upanishad are expected to recommence after the winter months.

Email: vedanta.melb@gmail.com

MELBOURNE

5-7 Angus Ave, Ringwood East, VIC 3135

Contact: Swami Sunishthananda +61426864750

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

Daily Activities

- Morning meditation and prayers were conducted from 7:00 am to 8:00 am.
- Aratrikam, bhajans, readings from the Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda literature, and meditation were conducted

between 7:00 pm and 8:00 pm daily.

Regular Activities

- A guided meditation session was conducted by Swami Sunishthananda on Sundays from 10:00 am to 10:30 am.
- A class was conducted on Sundays from 10:30 am to 11:30 am on the *Bhagavad Gita* by Swami Sunishthananda.
- A class on *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* was conducted on Thursdays from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm by Swami Sunishthananda.
- A *Vivekachudamani* class was conducted by Swami Sunishthananda on Tuesdays from 7:30 to 8:30 pm.
- A children's class was conducted on Sundays from 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm.

Celebrations

- Ramanavami was celebrated on Sunday, 6 April 2025 at Hughesdale Community Centre. The program included special worship, *Ramanama Sankirtana* and bhajans by devotees and the Children's Group. The event concluded with the sharing of *prasad*.



Ramanavami in Melbourne

- Buddha Jayanti was observed with a satsang on Sunday, 11 May 2025 at Hughesdale Community Centre. The program commenced with chanting and a guided meditation session. Swami Sunishthananda delivered two talks on meditation, followed by a question and answer session. Prasad was served to all attendees.



Buddha Jayanti in Melbourne

Other Activities

- Challakeri Brothers from India visited the Centre on Friday, 21 March 2025 and performed Vedic chanting following the evening aratrikam. Prasad was distributed after this.



Challakeri Brothers chanting in Melbourne

- A Managing Committee meeting was held on Saturday, 29 March 2025 at 4:00 pm
- Swami Sunishthananda attended an Online Forum with the Premier of Victoria, Jacinta Allan MP, on Wednesday, 16 April 2025, discussing bail reform and anti-vilification laws.
- On Sunday, 18 May 2025, Swami Sunishthananda was invited by the Bengali Puja

Cultural Society of Victoria to address the Children's Group at Mount Street Neighbourhood House.

- On Monday, 26 May 2025, Swami Sunishthananda conveyed Hindu blessings at the Maroondah Council Meeting.



Maroondah Council Meeting in Melbourne

- Guru Nanak's Birthday was observed at an interfaith gathering organized by the Sikh Council of Australia at Federation Square. Swami Sunishthananda represented the Hindu faith and delivered an address.



Guru Nanak's Birthday observed by the Sikh Council of Australia at Federation Square.

PERTH

51 Golf View Street, Yorkine, WA 6060

Email: vedantaperth@gmail.com

Contact: Sumita Chetty +61438928136

Daily Activities:

- Aratrikam was conducted each night by a person or family taking the responsibility for it.

Regular Activities

- A monthly satsang was held on 13 April 2025. The programme included prayers, bhajans, aratrikam and the distribution of prasad.
- The congregation in Perth again met on 18 May 2025 for prayers, bhajans, aratrikam and the distribution of prasad.

Celebrations

- Sri Ramakrishna's birth anniversary was held on 13 March 2025. The function included readings, offerings, and bhajans among other activities.



The devotees at Perth at Sri Ramakrishna's Birth Anniversary

SYDNEY

2 Stewart Street, Ermington, 2115

Email: vedasydney@vedantasydney.org

Contact: (02) 8197 7351

URL: www.vedantaaustralia.org

Daily Activities

- The shrine was open from 7:00 am to 1:00 pm and 4:00 pm to 8:30 pm seven days a week.
- 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

- Devotees also received spiritual counselling and guidance, with appointments from, Swami Sridharananda and others.
- Swami Dhanyananda conducted a class on the *Vivekachudamani* on Sunday mornings from 10:30 to 11:30 am.
- *Ramanama Sankirtana* was conducted on ekadashi days after the vesper service.
- The quarterly newsletter entitled *Reach* is compiled and published by the Vedanta Centre of Sydney.
- Yoga Classes were conducted by Sudhir Mooray on Saturdays from 9:30 am to 11:00 am and Sundays from 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm.
- A *Balak Sangha* (Children's Group) and a Vivekananda Youth Group met on Saturdays at 5 pm.
- An online bookstore is run by the Centre at <https://spiritualbookstore.org.au/>
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Celebrations

- Ramanavami was observed at the Vedanta Centre on 06 April 2025. The programme included worship, singing of *Ramanama Sankirtana*, bhajans and the distribution of prasad.



Ramanavami was observed at Sydney

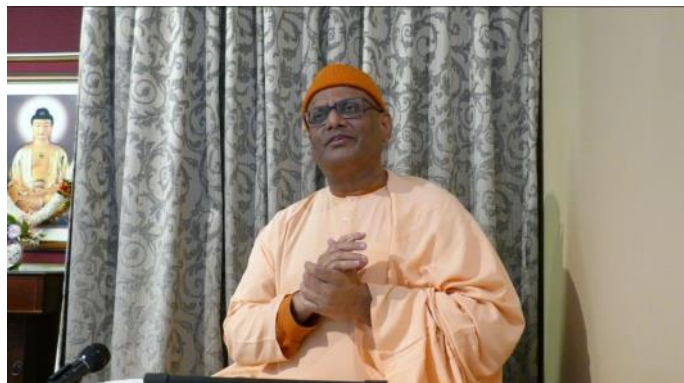
Other Activities

- Volunteers gathered on Saturdays, once every fortnight, volunteering in various activities for the upkeep of the Centre. Activities included gardening, painting, cleaning, and carpentry, among other works.

Visiting Swamis

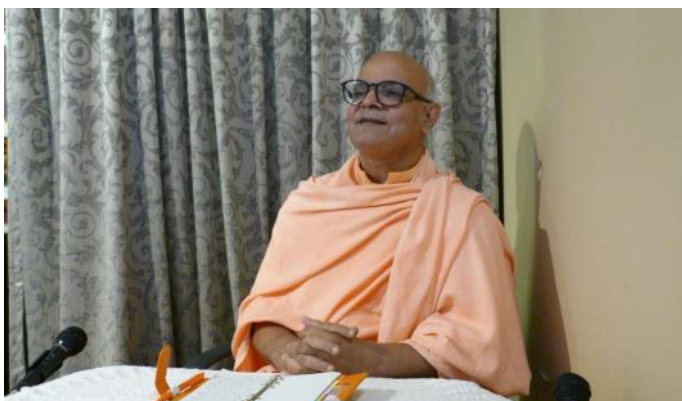


Busy Bee at the Vedanta Centre of Sydney



*Swami Sunishtananda addressing the devotees of
Sydney*

- Swami Atmeshananda from the Vedanta Centre (Brisbane Chapter) visited the Vedanta Centre of Sydney from 27 March to 01 April 2025. He addressed the devotees on 30 March 2025, on the theme 'Life: a Journey; not a Destination.'



*Swami Atmeshananda addressing the devotees in
Sydney*

- Swami Sunishthananda from the Vedanta Centre (Melbourne Chapter) visited the Vedanta Centre of Sydney from 1 April to 3 April 2025 and 2 May to 05 May 2025. He addressed the devotees on 4 May 2025, on the theme 'Spirituality in this Digital Age'.

2. The Need of a Guru and Qualifications of the Aspirant and Teacher

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

(From Bhakti Yoga, The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda)

In this issue of Reach we continue serializing Swami Vivekananda's Bhakti Yoga. Bhakti Yoga was included in the 3rd volume of 'The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda'. Guru Purnima will be celebrated soon and here the various requirements for a teacher or guru and a student or shisya is presented.

The Help of a Guru Quickens our Spiritual Life

Every soul is destined to be perfect, and every being, in the end, will attain the state of perfection. Whatever we are now is the result of our acts and thoughts in the past; and whatever we shall be in the future will be the result of what we think and do now. But this, the shaping of our own destinies, does not preclude our receiving help from outside; nay, in the vast majority of cases such help is absolutely necessary. When it comes, the higher powers and possibilities of the soul are quickened, spiritual life is awakened, growth is animated, and man becomes holy and perfect in the end.

The Futility of Book Learning when Compared to a human Guru

This quickening impulse cannot be derived from books. The soul can only receive impulses from another soul, and from nothing else. We may study books all our lives, we may become very intellectual, but in the end we find that we have not developed at all spiritually. It is not true that a high order of intellectual development always goes hand in hand with a proportionate development of the spiritual side in

man. In studying books we are sometimes deluded into thinking that thereby we are being spiritually helped; but if we analyse the effect of the study of books on ourselves, we shall find that at the utmost it is only our intellect that derives profit from such studies, and not our inner spirit. This inadequacy of books to quicken spiritual growth is the reason why, although almost every one of us can *speak* most wonderfully on spiritual matters, when it comes to action and the living of a truly spiritual life, we find ourselves so awfully deficient. To quicken the spirit, the impulse must come from another soul.

Preparedness of the Teacher and Student

The person from whose soul such impulse comes is called the Guru--the teacher; and the person to whose soul the impulse is conveyed is called the Shishya--the student. To convey such an impulse to any soul, in the first place, the soul from which it proceeds must possess the power of transmitting it, as it were to another; and in the second place, the soul to which it is transmitted must be fit to receive it. The seed must be a living seed, and the field must be ready

ploughed; and when both these conditions are fulfilled, a wonderful growth of genuine religion takes place. "The true preacher of religion has to be of wonderful capabilities, and clever shall his hearer be"--{Sanskrit}; and when both of these are really wonderful and extraordinary, then will a splendid spiritual awakening result, and not otherwise. Such alone are the real teachers, and such alone are also the real students, the real aspirants. All others are only playing with spirituality. They have just a little curiosity awakened, just a little intellectual aspiration kindled in them, but are merely standing on the outward fringe of the horizon of religion. There is no doubt some value even in that, as it may in course of time result in the awakening of a real thirst for religion; and it is a mysterious law of nature that as soon as the field is ready, the seed *must* and does come; as soon as the soul earnestly desires to have religion, the transmitter of the religious force *must* and does appear to help that soul. When the power that attracts the light of religion in the receiving soul is full and strong, the power which answers to that attraction and sends in light does come as a matter of course.

Importance of Introspection to Know if the Disciple's Aspiration is Genuine

There are, however, certain great dangers in the way. There is, for instance, the danger to the receiving soul of its mistaking momentary emotions for real religious yearning. We may study that in ourselves. Many a time in our lives, somebody dies whom we loved; we receive a blow; we feel that the world is slipping between our fingers; that we want something surer and higher, and that we must become religious. In a few days that wave of feeling has passed away, and we are left stranded just where we were before. We are all of us often mistaking such impulses for real thirst after religion; but as long as these momentary emotions are thus mistaken, that continuous, real craving of the soul for religion will not come, and we shall not find the true transmitter of spirituality into our nature. So whenever we are tempted to complain of our search after the truth that we desire so much, proving vain, instead of so complaining, our first duty ought to be to look into our own souls and find whether the craving in the heart is real. Then in the vast majority of cases it would be discovered that we were not fit for receiving the truth, that there was no real thirst for spirituality.

The Danger in Accepting a Fake Guru

There are still greater dangers in regard to the *transmitter*, the Guru. There are many who, though immersed in ignorance, yet, in the pride of their hearts,

fancy they know everything, and not only do not stop there, but offer to take others on their shoulders; and thus the blind leading the blind, both fall into the ditch. {Sanskrit}--"Fools dwelling in darkness, wise in their own conceit, and puffed up with vain knowledge, go round and round staggering to and fro, like blind men led by the blind."--(Katha Up., I.ii. 5). The world is full of these. Every one wants to be a teacher, every beggar wants to make a gift of a million dollars! Just as these beggars are ridiculous, so are these teachers.

Qualifications of the Aspirant and Teacher

Genuine Teachers

How are we to know a teacher, then? The sun requires no torch to make him visible, we need not light a candle in order to see him. When the sun rises, we instinctively become aware of the fact, and when a teacher of men comes to help us, the soul will instinctively know that truth has already begun to shine upon it. Truth stands on its own evidence, it does not require any other testimony to prove it true, it is self-effulgent. It penetrates into the innermost corners of our nature, and in its presence the whole universe stands up and says, "This is truth". The teachers whose wisdom and truth shine like the light of the sun are the very greatest the world has known, and they are worshipped as God by the major portion of mankind. But we may get help from comparatively lesser ones also; only we ourselves do not

possess intuition enough to judge properly of the man from whom we receive teaching and guidance; so there ought to be certain tests, certain conditions, for the teacher to satisfy, as there are also for the taught.

The Qualifications for an Aspirant: Purity, Thirst for Knowledge and Perseverance

The conditions necessary for the taught are purity, a real thirst after knowledge and perseverance. No impure soul can be really religious. Purity in thought, speech, and act is absolutely necessary for any one to be religious. As to the thirst after knowledge, it is an old law that we all get whatever we want. None of us can get anything other than what we fix our hearts upon. To pant for religion truly is a very difficult thing, not at all so easy as we generally imagine. Hearing religious talks or reading religious books is no proof yet of a real want felt in the heart; there must be a continuous struggle, a constant fight, an unrelenting grappling with our lower nature, till the higher want is actually felt and the victory is achieved. It is not a question of one or two days, of years, or of lives; the struggle may have to go on for hundreds of life-times. The success sometimes may come immediately, but we must be ready to wait patiently even for what may look like an infinite length of time. The student who sets out with such a spirit of perseverance will surely find success and realisation at last.

The Qualifications for a Teacher: Knowledge of the Spirit of the Scriptures, Sinlessness, Devoid of Ulterior Motive

In regard to the teacher, we must see that he knows the spirit of the scriptures. The whole world reads Bibles, Vedas, and Korans; but they are all only words, syntax, etymology, philology, the dry bones of religion. The teacher who deals too much in words and allows the mind to be carried away by the force of words loses the spirit. It is the knowledge of the *spirit* of the scriptures alone that constitutes the true religious teacher. The network of the words of the scriptures is like a huge forest in which the human mind loses itself and finds no way out. {Sanskrit}—"The network of words is a big forest; it is the cause of a curious wandering of the mind." "The various methods of joining words, the various methods of speaking in beautiful language, the various methods of explaining the diction of the scriptures are only for the disputations and enjoyment of the learned, they do not conduce to the development of spiritual perception"—{Sanskrit}. Those who employ such methods to impart religion to others are only desirous to show off their learning, so that the world may praise them as great scholars. You will find that not one of the great teachers of the world ever went into these various explanations of the text; there is with them no attempt at "text-torturing", no eternal playing upon the meaning of words and their roots. Yet they nobly taught, while others who have nothing to teach have taken up a word sometimes and written a

three-volume book on its origin, on the man who used it first, and on what the man was accustomed to eat, and how long he slept, and so on.

The Essence of Religion

Bhagavan Ramakrishna used to tell a story of some men who went into a mango orchard and busied themselves in counting the leaves, the twigs, and the branches, examining their color, comparing their size and noting down everything most carefully, and then got up a learned discussion on each of these topics, which were undoubtedly highly interesting to them. But one of them, more sensible than the others, did not care for all these things, and instead thereof, began to eat the mango fruit. And was he not wise? So leave this counting of leaves and twigs and note-taking to others. This kind of work has its proper place, but not here in the spiritual domain. You never see a strong spiritual man among these "leaf-counters". Religion, the highest aim, the highest glory of man, does not require so much labour. If you want to be a Bhakta, it is not at all necessary for you to know whether Krishna was born in Mathura or in Vraja, what he was doing, or just the exact date on which he pronounced the teachings of the Gita. You only require to *feel* the craving for the beautiful lessons of duty and love in the Gita. All the other particulars about it and its author are for the enjoyment of the learned. Let them have what they desire. Say "Shantih, Shantih" to their learned controversies, and let us "eat the mangoes."

Sinlessness or Purity for a Teacher

The second condition necessary in the teacher is—sinlessness. The question is often asked, "Why should we look into the character and personality of a teacher? We have only to judge of what he says, and take that up." This is not right. If a man wants to teach me something of dynamics, or chemistry, or any other physical science, he may be anything he likes, because what the physical sciences require is merely an intellectual equipment; but in the spiritual sciences it is impossible from first to last that there can be any spiritual light in the soul that is impure. What religion can an impure man teach? The *sine qua non* of acquiring spiritual truth for one's self or for imparting it to others is the purity of heart and soul. A vision of God or a glimpse of the beyond never comes until the soul is pure. Hence with the teacher of religion we must see first what he *is*, and then what he says. He must be perfectly pure, and then alone comes the value of his words, because he is only then the true "transmitter". What can he transmit if he has not spiritual power in himself? There must be the worthy vibration of spirituality in the mind of the teacher, so that it may be sympathetically conveyed to the mind of the taught. The function of the teacher is indeed an affair of the transference of something, and not one of mere stimulation of the existing intellectual or other faculties in the taught. Something real and appreciable as an influence comes from the teacher and goes to the taught. Therefore the teacher must be pure.

The Motive of the Teacher

The third condition is in regard to the motive. The teacher must not teach with any ulterior selfish motive—for money, name, or fame; his work must be simply out of love, out of pure love for mankind at large. The only medium through which spiritual force can be transmitted is love. Any selfish motive, such as the desire for gain or for name, will immediately destroy this conveying medium. God is love, and only he who has known God as love can be a teacher of godliness and God to man.

When you see that in your teacher these conditions are all fulfilled, you are safe; if they are not, it is unsafe to allow yourself to be taught by him, for there is the great danger that, if he cannot convey goodness to your heart, he may convey wickedness. This danger must by all means be guarded against. {Sanskrit}—"He who is learned in the scriptures, sinless, unpolluted by lust, and is the greatest knower of the Brahman" is the real teacher.

Cannot be Taught by Everybody

From what has been said, it naturally follows that we cannot be taught to love, appreciate, and assimilate religion everywhere and by everybody. The "books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in every thing" is all very true as a poetical figure; but nothing can impart to a man a single grain of truth unless he has the undeveloped germs of it in himself. To whom

do the stones and brooks preach sermons? To the human soul, the lotus of whose inner holy shrine is already quick with life. And the light which causes the beautiful opening out of this lotus comes always from the good and wise teacher. When the heart has thus been opened, it becomes fit to receive teaching from the stones or the brooks, the stars, or the sun, or the moon, or from any thing which has its existence in our divine universe; but the unopened heart will see in them nothing but mere stones or mere brooks. A blind man may go to a museum, but he will not profit by it in any way; his eyes must be opened first, and then alone he will be able to learn what the things in the museum can teach.

The Requirements for the Relationship between the Teacher and Student to Flourish

This eye-opener of the aspirant after religion is the teacher. With the teacher, therefore, our relationship is the same as that between an ancestor and his descendant. Without faith, humility, submission, and veneration in our hearts towards our religious teacher, there cannot be any growth of religion in us; and it is a significant fact that, where this kind of relation between the teacher and the taught prevails, there alone gigantic spiritual men are growing; while in those countries which have neglected to keep up this kind of relation, the religious teacher has become a mere lecturer, the teacher expecting his five dollars and the person taught expecting his brain to be filled with the teacher's words, and each going his own way after this much has

been done. Under such circumstances spirituality becomes almost an unknown quantity. There is none to transmit it and none to have it transmitted to. Religion with such people becomes business; they think they can obtain it with their dollars. Would to God that religion could be obtained so easily! But unfortunately it cannot be.

The Pricelessness of a Genuine Teacher Student Relationship

Religion, which is the highest knowledge and the highest wisdom, cannot be bought, nor can it be acquired from books. You may thrust your head into all corners of the world, you may explore the Himalayas, the Alps, and the Caucasus, you may sound the bottom of the sea and pry into every nook of Tibet and the desert of Gobi, you will not find it anywhere until your heart is ready for receiving it and your teacher has come. And when that divinely appointed teacher comes, serve him with child-like confidence and simplicity, freely open your heart to his influence, and see in him God manifested. Those who come to seek the truth with such a spirit of love and veneration, to them the Lord of Truth reveals the most wonderful things regarding truth, goodness, and beauty.

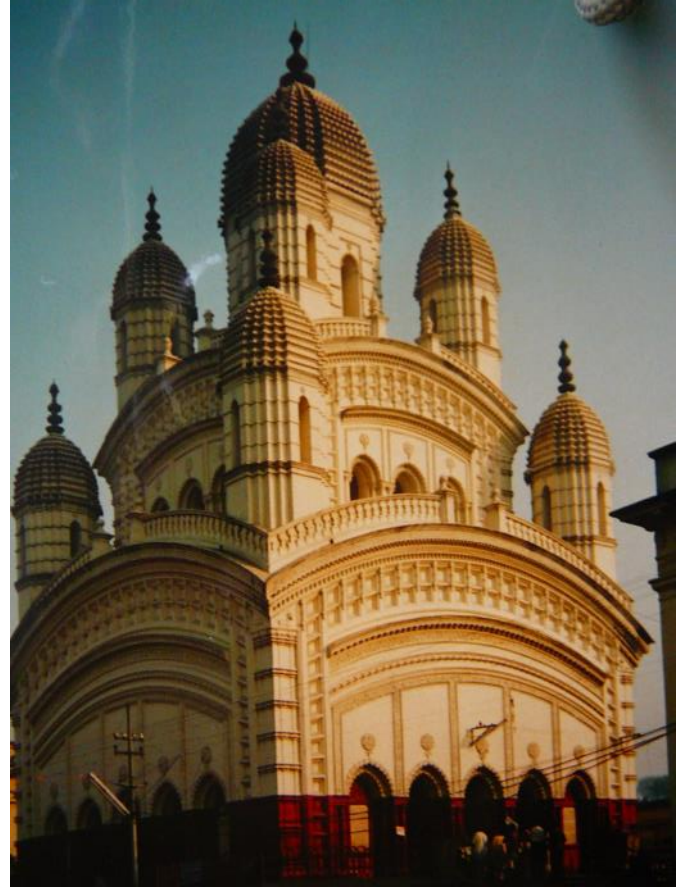
3. Dakshineswar Temple Garden

(Where Sri Ramakrishna initially lived and performed spiritual practices)

By
Russell Atkinson

The Flower Garden

To the east, far beyond the darkened city of light, the sun rose, as it had since the dawn of time. The lightened city awoke to the caw of crows and the whistle of kites high aloft, as it had since the dawn of cities. Slowly brightening, its light touched the tips of the temples in the Dakshineswar Temple Garden on the banks of the holy river, its Himalayan waters flowing fast with the ebb tide to the distant delta.



Joy flowed in the temple garden as with the first light the priests came to begin the morning worship, chanting, blowing conches and sounding gongs. Dawn music flowed from the music towers. The joyous sounds filled the temples, the flower gardens, orchard and goose pond...



...and to the panchavati, the grove of five sacred trees north of Sri Ramakrishna's room; even over to the village on the distant bank of the holy river. In his room, Sri Ramakrishna rose, chanting the names of avatars, deities, the names of the ten mahavidyas (The names of the great Goddesses) or intoning the mahavakyas (The four great sayings from the Upanishads, encapsulating the wisdom of Advaita or non duality), clapping his hands all the while, smiling or occasionally laughing as he walked slowly and stately to the temple of Mother Kali. There She stood, emblem of All, dancing resplendent on the recumbent body of Her Lord. Her hand gestures and everything about Her symbols signifying deep meaning.



Ecstatic, he offered flowers to the Cosmic Mother, or laughing, put them on his own head, then taking the yak-tail fan, began to fan the splendid image. In a voice of indescribable sweetness and pathos, he sang hymn after hymn.

'Who is there who can understand what Mother Kali is? All the philosophies are powerless to reveal Her...

...All creation is the sport of my mad Mother Kali. By Her Maya the three worlds are bewitched...'

..'Kali, who can know Thee? Numberless are Thy forms....'

...'Oh Mother, make me drunk with Thy love!

What need have I for knowledge or reason?

Thus drunk, unsteady on his feet, he staggered back to his room, a bewitching smile on his radiant face. The river flowed on to the sea.
