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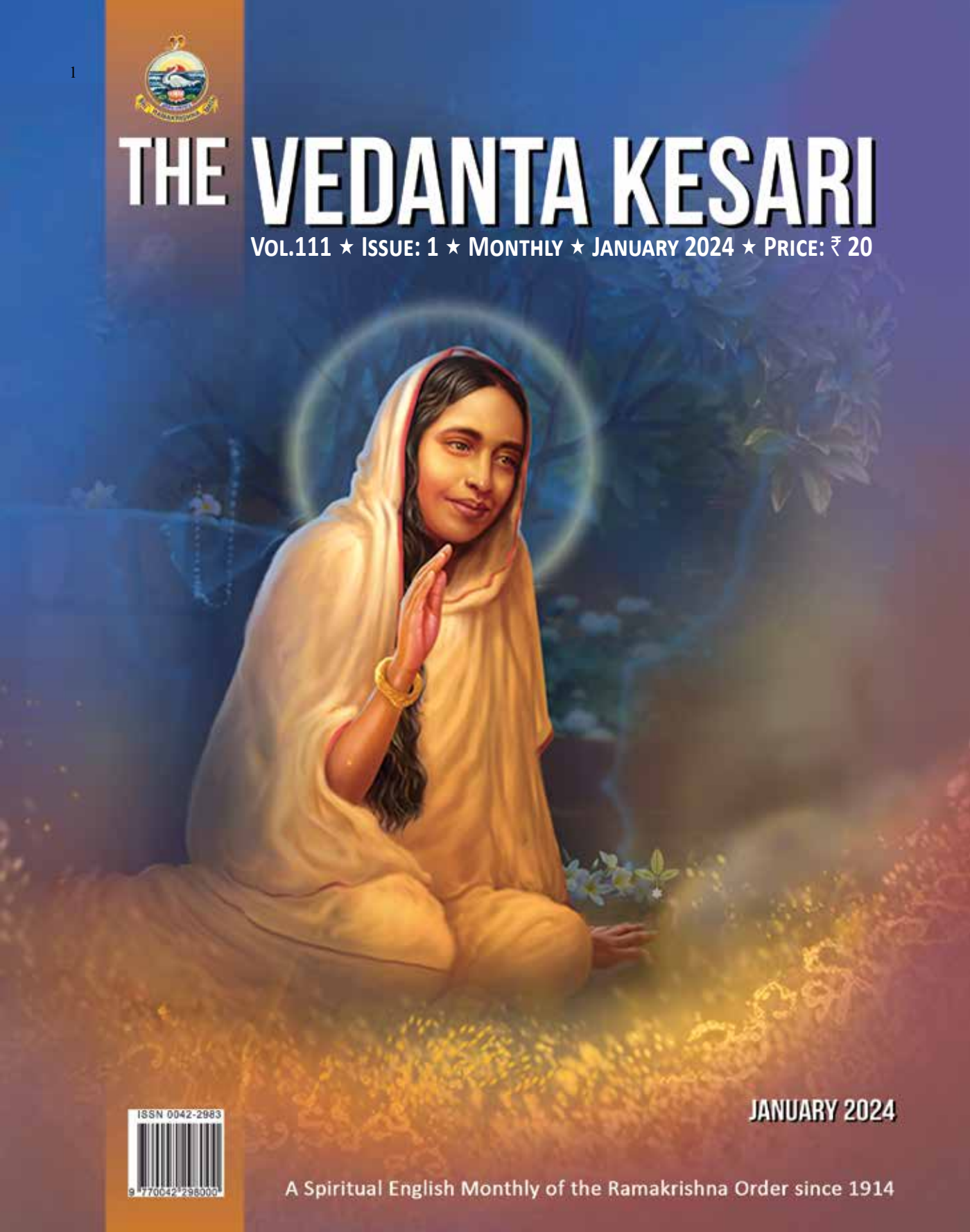

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07 Swami Shivananda Jayanti	04 & 18 Ashtami
16 Swami Saradananda Jayanti	07 & 21 Ekadashi

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।। Tanme Manaḥ Śivasaṃkalpam Astu ।।

May My Mind Dwell On That Which Is Auspicious

(Continued from November 2023 ...)

येन॒ कर्माण्य॒पसो॑ मनी॒षिणो॑ य॒ज्ञे कृ॒ण्वन्ति॑ वि॒दथे॑षु धीराः ।
यद॑पू॒र्वं य॒क्षम॒न्तः प्र॒जाना॑ं तन्मे॒ मन॑ः शि॒वस॑ङ्कल्प॒मस्तु ॥

- Vājasanēyī Samhita, 34-2

Introduction

We have already been introduced to the Siva-sankalpa-suktam in the November 2023 issue wherein we had discussed in detail the 1st *mantra*. The 2nd *mantra* of the six *mantras* is discussed here.

Mantra Word Meaning

येन — by whom; by the (Grace) of the All-Knowing and All-Powerful Lord; **अपसः** — industrious, non-lazy; **मनीषिणः** — strong-willed, having a keen mind (shrewd); **धीराः** — *Karmanishthas* and those with determination; **यज्ञे** — in Yajña karma; **विदथेषु** — in unfavourable conditions; **कर्माणि** — those good deeds; **कृण्वन्ति** — practising; **यत्** — that Ishwara *tattva*, **प्रजानां** — to those living beings (creatures); **अ-पूर्वं** — that has never existed before (unprecedented); eternally new; surprise; **यक्षं** — Yajña (worship) is doable; **अंतं** — the nearest substance; **मनः** — omniscience; **तत्** — that Ishwara *tattva*; **मे** — to self; **शिव-संकल्पं** — with good intentions and auspiciousness; **अस्तु** — may God bestow (on mind).

Mantra Meaning

That mind, by which the wise engage themselves in the *Yajña* and other karmas through the method laid down by Vedas, tradition and lineage, may it ever dwell on auspicious thoughts.

Raghava S. Boddupalli, is a Ph.D., Institute of Sanskrit and Vedic Studies (ISVS), Sanjayanagar, Bengaluru.

The first mantra described the nature and quality of the mind and the need to make the mind subtle, pure, and penetrative. The second *mantra* lays down the methods or procedures to achieve that goal.

Explanation

The principle of mind does not refer to the brain, but is the intelligence behind all life—the notion that we are all deeply connected to something beyond the human understanding, a bigger force, something we cannot control and something responsible for all the magic and beauty in the world.

This world is often referred to as *Tapo Bhumi* (world of austerity) where old karmas (either *papa* or *punya*) are continuously burnt and new ones created. If such a cycle continues, how and when could we ever realise the Self (Atman)? As long as karmas are created, human beings will always be born again and again to reap them and thereby suffer.

This mantra, therefore advises human beings to get involved and engage in performing the *Yajñas*, which were performed and shown by our Rishis, so that we can go beyond the cycle of karma by roasting the seeds of *vasanas* (habitual patterns).

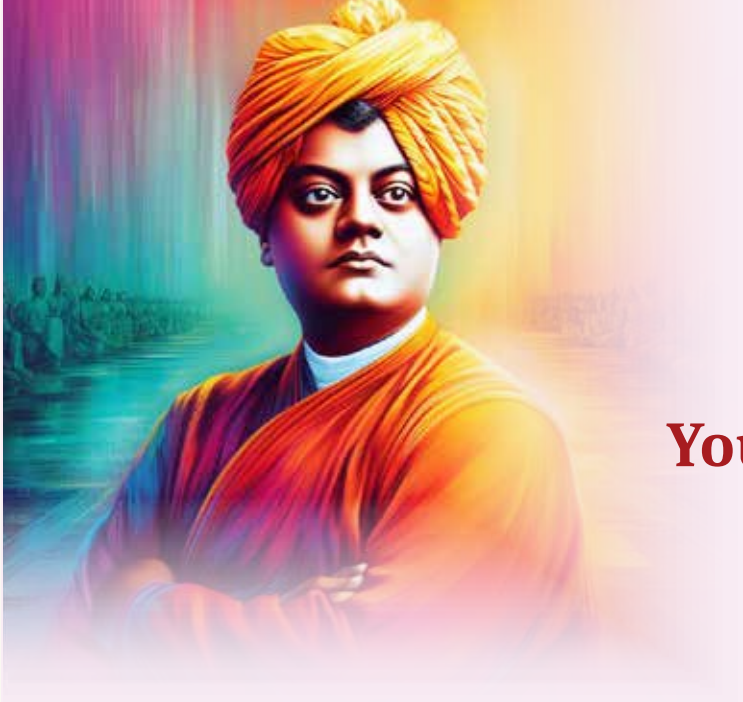
In the fourth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna reveals the different kinds of sacrifices, Yajñas, that humans can perform for their growth and development. A purely philosophical and spiritual touch is given to this description of the different forms of sacrifice, because the Gita is pre-eminently a spiritual gospel, a gospel of all life, and thus very comprehensive in its treatment of the basic values of life. *Dravyayajna*, *Yogayajna*, *Tapoyajna* and *Jnanayajna* are some of the terms used in this connection.

Sri Aurobindo postulates that Yajña is the inner worship and a subtler form of offering to God. Any outward form of worship is still in gross form, and even though it too may bestow good karmas, it will not bestow Self-realisation, which only the inner form of worship, *antar-Yajña*, can bestow.

The mind has an innate tendency to merge in whatever it comes in contact with; it craves this. So, it is ever agitated and restless. Through constant practice and training, it can be directed towards 'Om' and taught to merge with it. It is also naturally drawn towards sound. Hence it is compared to a serpent. The serpent has two crude qualities; its crooked gait and its tendency to bite all that comes its way. These two are also the characteristics of people. People also seek to hold and possess all that they set their eyes on. They also move crookedly. But the serpent has one praiseworthy trait. However poisonous and deadly be its nature, when strains of the charmer's music are played, it spreads its hood and merges itself in the sweetness of that sound, forgetting everything else. Similarly, through practice, people also can merge themselves in the bliss of Om. This close attention to sound (*Śabda*) is a principal way to realise the highest Atman, who is 'the Om of the Vedas'.

Let our mind, after performing Yajña, ever dwell on auspicious thoughts of ever-increasing abidance in the Self, and attain supremacy in all aspects.

(*To be continued. . .*)



'My Faith is in the Younger Generation'

Swami Vivekananda illustration is AI generated

Almost all of us think that the path of religion and the control of the mind are meant for old age. Those youth who get interested in religion and spirituality largely face opposition and sometimes harassment at the hands of their relatives and friends. At the most they are allowed or sometimes appreciated if they get involved in social activism and politics. As for the life of the spirit, they are advised to keep away from it till they retire from active life; their argument being that one has come to this world not for renouncing it but for enjoying it. Leave alone spiritual life, they do not allow the youth's involvement in social or political activism unless there are prospects of becoming prosperous. Any altruistic service is considered to be out of question for the youth.

The parents and relations of some of Sri Ramakrishna's disciples had this serious discomfort that their offspring is going off the 'spring' by the constant company of the Paramahamsa of Dakshineswar. Some even performed tantric rituals to influence the minds of their young descendants and dissuade them from following their esoteric adventurism under the guidance of some mad brahmin.

It was not their fault. Most of the time we are guided by misinformation and misconception. Unless we closely study and practise a particular way of life for sometime, we will not get a clear understanding of that particular way of life. This is true in almost all the fields of life. Therefore, there is a saying that one should not judge anything before thoroughly studying it. In these days of the internet and social media, this has become all the more applicable to all of us. We have few examples to illustrate this.

Madhusudan Saraswati was initially a staunch follower of Navya Nyaya tradition. He wanted to defeat the Vedantins and prove the supremacy of Nyaya philosophy over Vedanta. With this purpose in mind, he got himself admitted in the Vedanta school. However, he got converted to a staunch Vedantin while learning under various scholars, so much so that he later wrote many Vedanta treatises or texts that are still studied reverentially. Kumarila Bhatta too

is another shining example from antiquity, that can be highlighted here for his dedication to the Purva Mimamsa philosophy. He accepted discipleship of the Buddhists just to learn their philosophy so as to defeat them later. These are some interesting anecdotes from history that we need to revisit now and then.

Death as the only Reality

We see death everywhere. It is verily called *mrityu loka*—the realm of death. Our newspapers provide more news from the god of death, Yama's world than that of our own. They religiously report about the people who died recently for various reasons. In spite of our day starting with these reports from the realm of death, we are seldom serious about our own death, which may be forthcoming anytime soon. It is as if we stop mourning for those who die everyday.

There are some who learn from their own experience. But there are some others who take cues from the experiences of others or the previous generations. We find in our old literature the lessons learnt by the previous generations of humanity, and we can in turn readily learn from them. There is a 'forward compatibility' in the moral lessons taken from the past when we apply them in the modern context. One such text advises us that learning and wealth may be pursued by the intelligent without worrying about death, but one must practise dharma or duty as if death is so near as to catch us by our hair—**अजरामरवत् प्राज्ञो विद्यामर्थम् च चिन्तयेत्। गृहीत इव केशेषु मृत्युना धर्ममाचरेत् ॥**

There is the famous conversation between the Yaksha and Yudhishthira of the Mahabharata. One of the questions posed by the Yaksha was: 'What is the most wonderful fact in this world?', to which Yudhishthira answers, 'We see our fellow-beings every moment falling off around us; but those that are left behind think that they will never die. This is the most curious fact: in the face of death, none believes he will die!'

One such conversation happened between Swamiji and one of his disciples which goes like this:

> **Swamiji:** Look here—we shall all die! Bear this in mind always, and then the spirit within will wake up. Then only, meanness will vanish from you, practicality in work will come, you will get new vigour in mind and body, and those who come in contact with you will also feel that they have really got something uplifting from you.
>
> **Disciple:** But, Swamiji, will not the spirit break down at the thought of death and the heart be overpowered by despondency?
>
> **Swamiji:** Quite so. At first, the heart will break down, and despondency and gloomy thoughts will occupy your mind. But persist, let days pass like that—and then? Then you will see that new strength has come into the heart, that the constant thought of death is giving you a new life and is making you more and more thoughtful by bringing every moment before your mind's eye the truth of the saying, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!' Wait! Let days, months, and years pass, and you will feel that the spirit within is waking up with the strength of a lion, that the little power within has transformed itself into a mighty power! Think of death always, and you will realise the truth of every word I say (CW: 5.329-30).

The Path of Giving Up

Just as a person enters a river to take bath only for some time, the soul too enters this ever flowing world of matter for a limited span of time. The person taking a bath in the river may think for a while, 'I am the river', or , 'this water attached to my body is me'. In reality, it is just a momentary association that gives the feeling of

ownership. Therefore, the intelligent ones knowing this fact well do not get affected. For others, who are not so intelligent, Swamiji recommends the following practice:

> Ask nothing; want nothing in return. Give what you have to give; it will come back to you—but do not think of that now, it will come back multiplied a thousandfold—but the attention must not be on that. Yet have the power to give: give, and there it ends. Learn that the whole of life is giving, that nature will force you to give. So, give willingly. Sooner or later you will have to give up. You come into life to accumulate. With clenched hands, you want to take. But nature puts a hand on your throat and makes your hands open. Whether you will it or not, you have to give. The moment you say, 'I will not', the blow comes; you are hurt. None is there but will be compelled, in the long run, to give up everything. And the more one struggles against this law, the more miserable one feels. It is because we dare not give, because we are not resigned enough to accede to this grand demand of nature, that we are miserable (CW, 2.5).

'A wise man must give up wealth and also his life for the sake of others. When the end is nigh, it is better to sacrifice for a good cause!—**धनानि जीवितञ्चैव परार्थे प्राज्ञ उत्सृजेत्। सन्निमित्ते वरं त्यागो विनाशे नियते सति**'—we see Swamiji reiterating it often:

> **Disciple:** What good will come of any kind of work in this evanescent world?
>
> **Swamiji:** My boy, when death is inevitable, is it not better to die like heroes than as stocks and stones? And what is the use of living a day or two more in this transitory world? It is better to wear out than to rust out—specially for the sake of doing the least good to others (CW: 7.176).

Therefore, Swamiji says, 'My faith is in the younger generation'. Those are the ones who have something that they can sacrifice and make it blessed. In the despondent moments also, though rare as they were for Swamiji, he used to reflect these sentiments, 'so many lives have been lost in vain (searching after worldly pleasures), what if this one life too is given in renouncing them?' He says,

> How should the desire to know Brahman arise in one who has the hankering in his mind for the pleasures of family life, for wealth and for fame? He who is prepared to renounce all, who amid the strong current of the duality of good and evil, happiness and misery, is calm, steady, balanced, and awake to his Ideal, alone endeavours to attain to Self-knowledge. He alone by the might of his own power tears asunder the net of the world. **निर्गच्छति जगज्जालात् पिञ्जरादिव केसरी**—'Breaking the barriers of Maya, he emerges like a mighty lion' (CW: 7.193).

-·※·- -·※·- -·※·-

[Holy Mother] did not care for herself at all. While Sri Ramakrishna lived, she was all attention to him, to his personal comforts. She spared no pains to keep Sri Ramakrishna in a healthy state. Those who have seen the music tower in Dakshineswar where the Holy Mother stayed can have an idea in what conditions of discomfort she had to live in order to serve Sri Ramakrishna. It is a very small place and in that little room not only she would be there, several other lady devotees would also be there. She somehow managed to be there. She was the very personification of modesty, as it were.

—Swami Madhavananda, 'The Holy Mother, The Saint-maker'
(*The Vedanta Kesari*, May 1955)

Article

For Her Own Ends

SWAMI SUVIJNEYANANDA

The young girl of eighteen years, who had never walked a long distance, decided to tread eighty miles. A three days' walk and an arduous pilgrimage to the 'shrine' of her mad husband. The way was not safe. She knew there were highway-men. Nothing daunted her. On the way she got fever from exhaustion and had a strange visitation of an exquisitely beautiful girl of dark complexion.[1]

And there took place this historical dialogue. The sick and feverish girl asked, 'Where do you come from?' She (the dark girl) said, 'I come from Dakshineswar'. Amazed, the sick girl said: 'From Dakshineswar? That is where I long to be—to see my husband and to look after him. But now I have this fever, and perhaps, I shall never see him again.' 'What are you saying?' said the dark girl, 'Of course you will get to Dakshineswar. As soon as you are better, you

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shall go to him. I have been taking care of him for your sake'.[2]

The young girl in this story is Sri Sarada Devi; and the exquisitely beautiful dark complexioned girl is none other than Sri Bhavatarini Kali, and the person she was taking care at Dakshineswar is Sri Ramakrishna. But the important point she said is that, 'I have been taking care of him there (at Dakshineswar) for your sake.'

When we read this in the biography of Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, the first thought we may get is that if Kali had been taking care of Sri Ramakrishna—what for? and who assigned this task of taking care of Sri Ramakrishna to Her? Is it not for meeting 'Her own ends', that the Mother of the Universe was doing this?

Let us try to understand this Divine Lila (play). Even though the purpose of this article is to understand, 'What Mother Kali wanted to work out through Holy Mother?', It is also necessary to know what Kali planned to achieve through Sri Ramakrishna, and Swami Vivekananda. A 'Bilva Patra' is considered to be complete if it has all the three leaves attached to a single stem; Sri Ramakrishna was the central leaf, with the other two leaves as the Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda and the same Brahma Shakti is working out in all the three leaves to awaken in humanity, the purpose of human birth.

Sri Shankaracharya belonged to eighth century CE. After his lifetime, India passed through more than a thousand years under Muslim and British (Christian) rulers. The world-view had undergone a change from a religious to a scientific or material paradigm. Under the influence of Western education, the educated Hindus began to lose faith in their own religion, looking down upon it as idolatry. The West, which had no access to the perennial philosophy of Vedanta, was also losing faith in its own religion under the influence of science. In short, mankind was losing sight of the very purpose of human life, which is to discover its divine nature and thereby find the unity, not only behind all human beings but also behind the whole Universe. To remind man of this purpose of his life and make him strive for this, the power that controls human destiny had to manifest Itself in human form.

Swami Vivekananda explained the advent of Sri Ramakrishna to his disciples, Sister Nivedita and others, during their travels in the Himalayas in 1898 in these words, 'You see, there was a feminine something somewhere, that wanted to manifest, … as a man, and that something became Ramakrishna Paramahamsa —and that is why He (Sri Ramakrishna) always spoke of Himself as "My Divine Mother". "I always look upon Sri Ramakrishna as an incarnation of Kali. Isn't that what the future will call him?" asked Nivedita in the presence of Swami Vivekananda. He replied, "Yes, I think there is no doubt that Kali worked up the body of Sri Ramakrishna for Her own ends"'.[3]

Interestingly, when Narendra was in financial difficulty and came to Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar, he was already a follower of Brahmo Samaj of Keshabchandra Sen, which required giving up *murti puja*, idolatry. But he had a divine experience, the living presence of Kali. Swami Vivekananda expressed his feelings to Nivedita in these words, 'I fought my Master for six years.' Swamiji declared, 'I cannot but believe that there is somewhere a great Power That thinks of Herself as feminine, and called Kali, and Mother. … And now I believe that She guides me in every little thing I do, and does with me what She will! … I too had to accept Her. I had great misfortunes at that time. My father died and so on. And she saw Her opportunity to make a slave of me. These

were Her very words: "To make a slave of you." And Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa made me over to Her.'[4] Thus the great feminine Power entered and worked through Swami Vivekananda to spread the message of Vedanta in new light. That Mother Kali was taking care of Sri Ramakrishna to meet her own ends is so very true. Swami Saradananda in his magnum opus, *The Great Master* or now *Sri Ramakrishna and His Divine play*, has very beautifully placed before the readers this fact. He says,

> In Her inscrutable lila, the Divine Mother gave the Master wonderful and unprecedented spiritual experiences throughout his life. She infused in him with universal and liberal religious ideas that she had never inspired in any other great teacher of the world. Divine Mother made the Master understand this and simultaneously revealed to him the amount of spiritual power that she has instilled in him and the fact that she made him a wonderful instrument to transmit this power to others. The Master was amazed when he realized the dearth of spirituality in the world and how the Mother's grace had given him a stockpile of extraordinary spiritual power to be used in removing that want.[5]

Some more facts are noteworthy here. Swami Saradananda continues, 'Out of grace, the Divine Mother made the Master understand this and showed him that she had enacted Her lila through him many times in previous ages and would continue to do so many times in the future'.

Through Sri Ramakrishna the Mother of the Universe has established before mankind that, (1) God is a reality, and can be realised in this very life. (2) Whatever that is there in this Universe is 'His' i.e., He is the Creator. Everything that is going on in this world is His sweet will. He is the agent (doer) and He is the enjoyer. (3) So what is given to man is *sharanagati* – to surrender to Him. (4) By combining our power of reasoning, emotions and feelings (Bhakti) and holding on to unselfishness in karma (as man is bound to do karma) and rejecting all that makes a man weak, a man has to evolve spiritually and live in this world until he achieves his goal of God realisation.

So far we have tried to understand how the Divine Mother Kali, working through Sri Ramakrishna had enacted Her lila. She had enacted Her lila through Sri Sarada Devi in a different way.

The great feminine power that manifested itself as Sri Ramakrishna also manifested itself in another, a feminine form, to bestow this all-embracing love of Mother on one and all. That feminine form is Sri Sarada Devi. Sri Ramakrishna was well aware of the true nature of Sarada Devi. Once he even said, 'We both are the companions of the Divine Mother Kali—the Mother of the Universe'. Swami Apurvanandaji has described well in his biography on Holy Mother that both Sri Ramakrishna and Sarada Devi are the incarnations of Mahashakti, and had come for *Yugadharma–Sansthapana*. They were supporting each other in this mission.[6]

Later in Dakshineswar, he was to worship her as *shodashi*, an aspect of the Divine Mother. There is a description in the second chapter of Sri Durga Saptashati when gods were defeated by Mahishasura, they went to Sri Vishnu and Sri Shiva and prayed to save them. Hearing the poor condition of the Devas who were in banishment, Vishnu and Shiva got angry.

ततोऽतिकोपपूर्णस्य चक्रिणो वदनात्ततः ।
निश्चक्राम महत्तेजो ब्रह्मणः शङ्करस्य च ।।2.10**।।**

—And from them the Divine fierce brilliance manifested and at that time divine power from Indra and other gods manifested and merged in that Divine fierce brilliance.

अन्येषां चैव देवानां शक्रादीनां शरीरतः ।
निर्गत सुमहत्तेजस्तच्चैक्यं समगच्छत ।।2.11।।

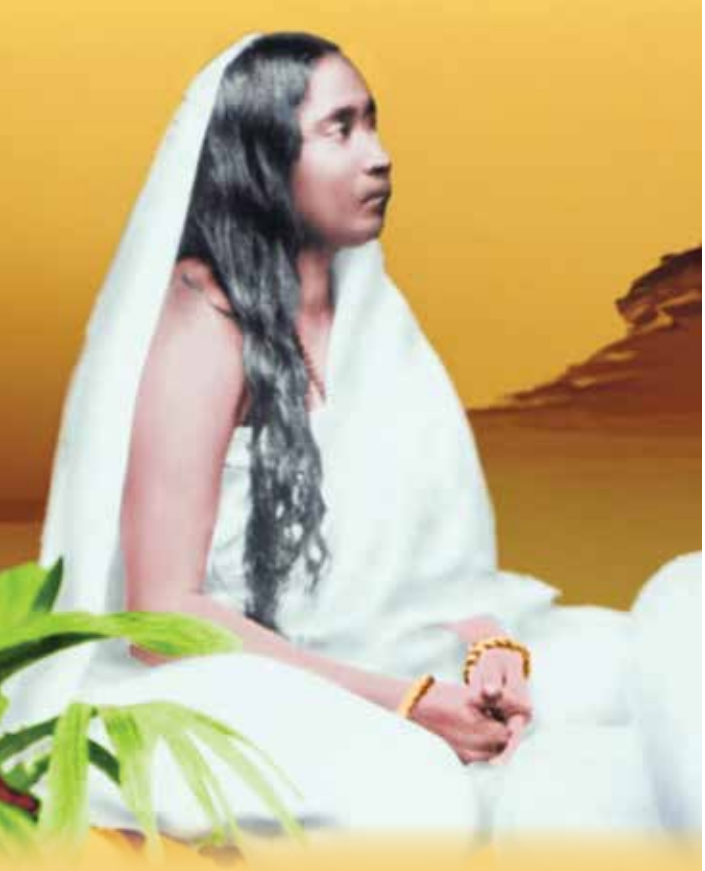
—And finally from this great brilliance there appeared a beautiful woman. She received different weapons from all gods including Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. This Divine manifestation in the form of a Devi, killed all the demons.

The Divine Mother Sri Durga is actually the combined divine power of Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh and other gods. The Master performed the Shodashi Puja on Phalaharini Kali Puja day, i.e., Amavasya or dark night. He awakened the Divine Mother, Tripurasundari, Eternal Virgin, possessor of all power. He worshipped in person of the Holy Mother this Divine Power and he offered himself to the Devi manifest in the person of Sarada, and then forever surrendered at her feet the result of his sadhana, his rosary and everything including himself.

This Shodashi Puja had great significance from many angles. As described earlier, i.e. in Durga Saptashati, the Divine Mother was the combination of the divine powers of all the gods. Sri Ramakrishna had performed many sadhanas and had divine experiences. His first experience was also of Divine Mother in the form of an ocean of divine light and then he had visions of all gods and goddesses. So when he offered the fruits of all his sadhanas to the Holy Mother, he empowered her and that very moment Holy Mother became **सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपिणी.**

Now let us think about the Tithi, the auspicious day of Phalaharini Kali Puja i.e., Amavasya or new moon night. In general, Kali Puja is performed on Amavasya—new moon night. But Sri Ramakrishna worshipped the Divine Mother Tripurasundari instead. According to scriptures, this deity is to be worshipped on a full moon day, **पूर्णिमा**, and not on a new moon night, **अमावस्या**. Even though it is the same divine aspect of the Mother of the Universe Sri Kali, as a rule of rituals this Divine aspect of Adyashakti, or the Primordial Power, is generally worshipped on a full moon day, **पूर्णिमा**.

The significance of this Puja done by Sri Ramakrishna is as if he is communicating to whole of mankind that we are fully covered by *ajnana*, ignorance, just like on a new moon night (**अमावस्या**) the moon is completely covered and there is deep darkness only. From Pratipada (**प्रतिपदा**) onwards, the moon slowly grows day by day and on the *purnima*, full moon night, it is once again in full bloom with its grandeur. Likewise when a man worships Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi as Adyashakti, he too will be free



from ignorance slowly but surely and will be established in his full grandeur.

Sri Ramakrishna did the Puja of Shodashi—Tripurasundari and awakened the Divine Power in the person of Sri Sarada Devi. He was then well established in his Matribhava Sadhana and became one with the Divine Mother. Now the question arises as to how Sarada Devi had not only accepted his puja but also the fruits of all his Sadhanas? While describing this concept beautifully in his biography of Holy Mother, Swami Apurvananda writes that Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi had the full knowledge of Her Divine stature like Mother Sita and all her previous incarnations. She knew her Divine nature, the reason for her incarnation in human form and Her relation with Sri Ramakrishna etc.[7]

Few were able to realise the Divine nature of the Holy Mother as she always kept herself covered. But sometimes just like a flash of lightning she revealed her Divinity, though in general she had great hesitation in doing so. 'Once Kedar (Swami Keshavananda) of Koalpara said, "Mother, nobody will care for the goddesses Shashthi, Sitala etc. after you." The Mother replied, "Why should they not? They are only my parts." Another day, Kedar was talking with Mother at Jagadamba Ashrama at Koalpara, when some people came to offer worship to Shashthi under a nearby banyan tree to the accompaniment of beating of drums. As this interfered with the conversation, Kedar said in disgust, "Ah! Why don't you stop, my fellows!" The Mother at once interceded. "How you behave, Kedar! I indeed am all! Why do you get irritated?"'[8] There are many such incidents. But these few suffice to prove the point that Holy Mother was conscious about her divinity.

With the worship of the Holy Mother as Shodashi, Sri Ramakrishna's Mother worship and all sadhanas were completed. During those days in Dakshineswar, he was anxious to see that the Divine Mother in her be awakened. He also felt relieved and happy to find her take the responsibility of the physical and spiritual welfare of his disciples. He found that it was impossible for her to refuse anyone who called her 'Mother'. Before leaving the world, he gave her the responsibility of carrying out his unfinished mission. He not only gave this responsibility but also the total freedom as to how she would conduct her spiritual ministration. He was very careful to keep her ever-soaring mind on the human plane. He once said that they were incarnations of the same Maha-Shakti. They were here in the world to set right the new religion, to set in motion the wheel of neo-Vedanta. They were supporting each other in this mission of 'Jivoddhar'—the evolution of Jivas.

Sri Ramakrishna demonstrated renunciation of the world and worldliness, whereas Sri Sarada Devi demonstrated renunciation in worldliness. In and through Sarada Devi, the universal mother brought home the Advaita philosophy to ordinary mortals through the path of emotions. Vedanta says that this world is unreal and lays much stress on 'not this, not this'. According to Vedanta, everything is illusory—and a Vedantin has to negate everything. But Holy Mother's Vedanta was *iti iti*, making this whole world one's own. For her, nobody was a stranger. Her expressions in this regard are very clear when she firmly declared that she is the mother of all. She treated all her children with equal tenderness, for no man is entirely guiltless. Once a direct disciple of the Master was offended with the conduct of a certain devotee that he requested the Mother not to allow him to get anywhere near her. But she replied, 'If my son wallows in the dust or mud, it is I who have to wipe all the dirt from his body and take him in my lap'. Her spontaneous answer to Swami Vishweshwarananda was, 'I look upon you as Narayana, and as sons also'. We find in the Mother's conception of son-ship a fusion of the human and the divine. Similarly, we get a harmonisation of the finite and the infinite in her conception of motherhood.

Through Sri Ramakrishna, the Universal Mother (Kali) placed before mankind an example of *how a man can seek God* and how the intense yearning helps him in realising God. On the other hand, the Holy Mother demonstrated *how the Divine incarnation, the Divine Mother seeks humankind* by coming down and taking in her embrace one and all. None was excluded, *not even the wicked or the sinner*. Once a 'mulberry robber' brought some plantains to the Mother and said, 'Mother, here are some plantains for the Master; will you accept them?' A woman devotee happened to be there. She was taken aback when she heard that Mother had consented to his request and had deposited the fruits in the store. She said warningly, 'These are thieves, you know. Why should his things be offered to the Master?' When that mulberry robber had left, Holy Mother turned to the woman and administered a stern rebuke, 'I know who is good and who is not'.[9] The Holy Mother's mission was to uplift the fallen and she used to say that to err is human, but how many know how to lead an erring man? Swami Tapasyanandaji rightly described this as, 'She was the mother of men and not their judge. For to judge is human, but to love, forgetting all shortcomings, is Divine'.[10]

The purity of collyrium of knowledge (**ज्ञानांजन विमलनयन**) had adorned the eyes of Sri Ramakrishna which had the power to dispel delusion. But what was there in Holy Mother's eyes which could transform human beings completely? What collyrium did she use, to remove the delusion from those, who came near Her? It is *anugraha* shakti with collyrium of love. Those who came near Her got free from inner impurities. Swami Gambhiranandaji has described this aspect so beautifully in Holy Mother's biography, where he says, 'The infinitely glorious Deity, endowed with the best of all qualities and transcending the lapses and limitations of life, holds before the aspirant the unsurpassable ideal whereby he/she is inspired and energised to attain that state. The ever-loving and ever-smiling Mother melts the heart of the child with a touch of affection, wipes away from aspirant's mind all traces of past failures and dejection, and exerts an irresistible pull whereby the aspirant (child) gets dissolved in the ocean of bliss'.[11]

Sri Ramakrishna selected his disciples with due examination but that was not the case with the Holy Mother. She was very happy with the 'ants' that had come to her in large numbers.

Her great assurance, 'Do not fear my child. As long as you remember me, your mother, why should you be frightened? Whoever has come here, whoever is my child, is already redeemed. Free yourself from all anxiety by entrusting your future to me. Never fear. Whenever you are in distress just say to yourself, "I have a mother"'. This assurance might have been uttered long ago, before 1920, but the utterance is in a 'present tense'. That means she was very much there that time and she is ever present even today to free us from anxiety and lead us from darkness to light. She is being the eternal principle—**प्रकृतिं परमां अभयां वरदाम्**. She is even now functioning in a **चिन्मयरूप** and is ever present.

Swami Apurvanandaji has highlighted another important aspect of Holy Mother's life. He mentions that the Holy Mother came to Dakshineswar in March 1872 and started living there. From that time onwards till August 1886 she had performed rigorous sadhana for fifteen long years till Sri Ramakrishna left his mortal frame. During his lifetime, serving him day and night was her biggest and toughest sadhana. During this period, before revealing her Universal Motherhood, she was enacting her role as a perfect wife. Sri Ramakrishna was an ideal husband. It is through this seva that they used to come together and it is through this sadhana that she had reached to the state of non-dual knowledge.[12] Seva or Seva Yoga is a means to achieve non-dual experience. Can we say that this is the source of the motto of the Ramakrishna Sangha—*atmano mokshartham jagad hitaya cha*? In later days just pointing to her person i.e., her body, she used to say, 'Sri Ramakrishna is here in this body (frame) in a subtle form'. Seva Yoga means combination of Jnana, Bhakti and Karma Yoga, i.e., Yoga Samanvaya. Holy Mother is an ideal and most perfect example of Seva Yoga. Manifesting Herself in human form of Sri Sarada she was following all the human ways of life. While living so, she was facing all sorts of difficulties and troubles that a common person has to face. The purpose of this Divine Lila was to show to humankind that **सुखदुःखे समे कृत्वा, लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ** (Gita, 2.38)—one can keep oneself in equilibrium in all the three levels of one's mortal existence. Rightly has it been said in the prelude to the biography of Holy Mother that, 'We have to remember that it is beyond human capacity to fully comprehend or formulate in words the significance of an incarnation, inasmuch as he is the embodiment of all kinds of spiritual moods. We accept these following three standards as a basis for an intellectual apprehension of the life of the Holy Mother, wherein we shall see the qualities of motherhood in their supreme perfection, and we shall come to know how they acted in the present age for evolving new spiritual values. We shall see how in her life the feminine virtues consequent to such positions in the family as daughter, sister, wife or matron, reached their ideal states, and above all, how her pristine purity was itself an inspiration to others.'

Her role as universal Mother is something unique. Once a certain female devotee expressed in course of a conversation, 'Now so many men and women are calling "Mother, Mother" and disturbing you. Though we are not born from your womb, that does not mean we are not your children'. Hearing this, the Holy Mother immediately stood up and said to her firmly: 'What did you say, that you were not born from my womb? Then from whose womb were you born? Are you not my children? Then whose children are you? Is there any mother other than me? I exist in all women and in all mothers. Those who come to me from any place are all my children'.[13] Swami Jnanananda (Jnan) had given a vivid description of his Diksha and

the conversation he had with the Holy Mother where he vehemently expressed, 'How can you be my mother? My mother is at home and she is still alive.' 'I am that mother', she said, 'look at me closely'. 'See whether I am that mother of yours or not.' 'Stupefied, I saw that my biological mother was seated in front of me. My body was thrilled with awe. I fell at her feet, saying, "Mother, Mother!" All my arguments ceased and I surrendered at her feet forever. She gave me this knowledge: that she was not only mantra-guru, she was my own mother, the Mother of all beings, and the Mother of the Universe'.[14]

The case of Swami Jnanananda is not the only one; on many occasions and to different devotees she expressed her Universal Motherhood. Sri Krishna says in Gita: **सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणम् व्रज, अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुच:** (Gita, 18.66). Even though Sri Krishna had given this great assurance that he will liberate one who surrenders to him from all sins, is it really that easy to surrender? Actually here the responsibility of surrendering oneself is on the sadhaka. But in case of the Holy Mother, she takes all the responsibilities to make us free from all blemishes. When she says, 'I am the Mother. Am I not to clean my child?' she says openly that 'I am the mother of the virtuous and I am also the Mother of the evil minded'. This is just her motherliness.

Swami Gambhiranandaji beautifully brings out this concept of the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi in her biography, where he says, 'If it is the aim of the aspirant to merge the sense of "I" and "mine" in the universal ego of the Deity, and to taste the bliss of consciousness through unquestioning dependence and refuge in that one reality, then in the motherhood of the Deity lies the guarantee for such a consummation'.[15] 'Through the different attitudes of quietude, service, and son-ship to God, we do get an increasingly greater degree of intimacy

with Him; but the absolute self-absorption of the unquestioning child, perhaps, transcends even this'.[16]

In reality, man is actually aware of this fact that he has weakness, and inability. Many times a real aspirant laments for his lapses in carrying out his spiritual discipline or even for that matter his worldly duties. And he feels the need of a person who will forgive his shortcomings. He finds that mercy and assurance in the unselfish love of a mother because he remembers his dependence on his mother in his childhood. So to progress in spiritual endeavour why not take support of this 'mother and child' attitude? Swami Gambhirananda explains this aspect in these words, 'Why should he be deprived of this in the field of spiritual advance?' 'The Mother and the child' is such a transparently pure attitude of the aspirant, that there is no room for any bad

thought; there is no touch of selfishness and meaningless emotionalism. This figure of the Mother, shining in Her self-collected poise and compassion is absolutely unparalleled. The aspirant, sitting fearlessly in Her lap or holding on to Her apron, can easily get across this wilderness of the world. God's incarnation as Mother was necessary for fulfilling these needs. And above all, it was necessary for the Deity to come down as the Holy Mother, so that the present sensuous and materially minded world might be raised to a higher state of aspiration and experience. Humanity is, therefore, fortunate today in having this living and life-transforming Motherhood in a concrete form. That concrete form is our Holy Mother.

Sri Ramakrishna discriminated while selecting his disciples, but the Holy Mother never chose, selected or discriminated. There are innumerable examples to support or justify this statement. We may not be possessing great qualities. We may not be virtuous or with good propensities. If it is so, then how can we expect the special grace of Sri Ramakrishna to descend on us? But we need not worry because we are not in any way that unfortunate so as to lose Mother's grace. It is just impossible. It is just enough if we can call Her 'Mother, Mother' with intense faith and real feelings.

This is an *ekakshari* (one-word) mantra by repeating which we will be able to cross this ocean of samsara. Bhavatarini Kali has for 'Her own Ends', i.e., to liberate mankind, assumed this human form of the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi. We must always remember these heartening words of Holy Mother, 'What! You, who is my son, will be damned! Whoever has come here, whoever is my son is already redeemed. Destiny dare not throw my children into hell. Free yourself from all anxiety by entrusting your future to me. And remember this always, that there's one behind who will come to you at the right moment and lead you to the everlasting domain'.

Can we really give our power of attorney to Mother? It seems, she is ever ready, only we have to love Her and accept Her as the guiding star of our lives. Jai Ma!

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Operation Narada

SWAMI ATMAVIKASANANDA

We might have experienced that with the advent of the month of Jyeshtha, which corresponds to the months of May-June as per the English calendar, different types of insects in different shapes, with and without wings, flying like helicopters get attracted towards light and swarm our house. Many times, we wonder – where do these insects or pests come from? They do not just drop from the sky. If they are not visible to the naked eye in other seasons, then where exactly are these little creatures hiding? Biologists say that they hide themselves in the core of the earth and appear as soon as the weather is favourable to them. Similarly, people who have a serious outlook towards life, those who have experienced the hollowness of this life, and those who wanted to bring about a drastic change in it, must have experienced that the pests called lust, anger, greed, arrogance, envy, temptation, contempt, and jealousy play a major role in disrupting the balance of life. These vices, which are otherwise hidden, appear as soon as the conditions are favourable to them. A small slip-up from our side and there they are! This is what common people like us experience daily.

In his book 'Ramcharitmanas', Goswami Tulsidas has given an account of Narada and through it he has beautifully described these flaws found in human beings. Once Narada, the saint who was known as the messenger of gods, was practising intense austerities in the Himalayas. Though Narada could not stay at one place for a moment due to a curse on him, that day it seemed like the curse was not working because Narada was unusually engrossed in deep meditation. Generally, we observe that when a person is doing some good work, making a name for himself in the society, it first invokes fear in the minds of his opponents which later transforms into jealousy; they are apprehensive of losing their position to someone else. This is exactly what happened to Indra. He was worried that Narada's asceticism may put his throne in danger and, in order to distract Narada he started conspiring against

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him. In order to destroy someone who is efficient and virtuous, tools such as treachery, conspiracy and deceit are required. And these tools cannot be used by one person alone; one needs a team or the help of like-minded accomplices. In this situation Indra took the help of such a trustworthy accomplice. His name was Kamadev, the god of lust and sensuality.

Kamadev had an excellent track record. His failure rate was extremely low. Not just commoners but even great saints were not spared by him; his mere glance was enough to send their resolve for a toss. Today too, Indradev had summoned him to carry out the special task of stopping Narada from practising austerities. Kamadev armed himself with the famous bow, 'Madan' and a quiver full of arrows, each arrow representing the Navarasas i.e. the nine expressions of shringara, haasya, adbhuta etc. Then along with his army, he set about to distract Narada. He tried every trick in the trade to distract Narada from his meditation. He used all sorts of arrows, ranging from sensuality to rage to terror and to even obscenities. But to no avail! It seemed that either Rambha and Urvashi, the celestial dancers, were not in their usual mood or, Narada himself was in an entirely different mood. Now Kamadev got really nervous and realised that his defeat was inevitable. Generally, this is what happens around us. The moment a person realises that his involvement in a conspiracy is about to be exposed, he, who is a pro at such things will show arrogance or else will accept defeat. Now here we are talking about Kamadev, the one from the 'god' category. Fearing Narada's curse, Kamadev accepted defeat and revealed the truth. Very magnanimously Narada forgave Kamadev and told him that he had no interest in Indra's throne. Before leaving, a dejected Kamadev did not forget to praise Narada by saying that in the entire universe there was no man of greater renunciation than Narada. Here, Narada completely failed in assessing the enemy's strength. Kamadev was a politician, a diplomat, and a trusted minister of Indra's cabinet. He was bestowed with many demonical qualities such as deceit, shrewdness, selfishness, betrayal, and hence, he was the most trusted member from Indra's inner circle. Narada failed to understand that such a person is not worthy of forgiveness and he had to pay a big price for his mistake.

But Narada was very pleased with himself. Finally, he had conquered lust, desire. His face was beaming with pride; but who will be able to see this beaming face in the jungles of the Himalaya. Such a big event and no one around to praise him? Narada was bitten by the bug called ego. An egoist cannot be happy in such a situation. Once he gets into the habit of being praised by others, he just cannot live without it. But Narada had conquered lust, anger, and greed. So, from where did this vice called ego set in? In agriculture when seeds are sown, they are nourished with water and fertilisers in order to harvest the crop in a large quantity. As the crops or plants grow, the weeds grow too. If the weeds are not cut, they soon infest the crops and destroy the field. Intentionally no person will sow the seeds of vice; but it is rather strange that the weeds of vice grow at the same place where the crops of virtues are reaped. Realising that flaws sprout along with virtues, one must chop off the growing weeds from time to time.

Though Narada braved the various Navarasa arrows that Kamadev had directed at him, one weakness was enough to bring him disgrace. Adulation! Praise! Pleasure comes in two types—gross and subtle. We knowingly experience the pleasures that are at the grosser level; but the subtle pleasures are experienced by the subconscious mind. Of the many subtle

pleasures, praise is one such pleasure. Even the greatest of human beings succumb to this subtle pleasure. Everyone is hungry for praise. 'I am rich, I am a scholar, I am learned.' For that matter, even a renounced person would like to hear, 'He is a person of great renunciation'. If you are doing some good, praiseworthy work, keep in mind that the weeds are growing around. A clever person will immediately destroy the growing weeds of egotism. And here, Kamadev himself certified Narada that there was no other person in the whole universe as great as Narada, the renouncer of lust and greed! Ego of wealth aggravates when a poor person is around, and ego of knowledge aggravates when an ignorant person is around. But then, Narada was a knowledgeable person, the conqueror of lust and greed. He started thinking of ways to publicise his feat. And finally, he got an answer! 'I should go to Lord Shiva. He is known to have conquered lust, burnt Kamadev to ashes and is known as the creator of the Universe (Vedaswaroop). But he is hot tempered which only means that, unlike me he has not conquered anger. I have defeated lust as well as anger. I did not curse Kamadev; instead I granted him forgiveness. I would definitely like to see Lord Shiva's reaction on my victory.' And so, he was on his way to meet Lord Shiva. But his real intention of meeting Lord Shiva was to inform him that, 'I am a notch above you'.

Lord Shiva was at Mount Kailash with his favourite disciples Nandi and Bhringi. He welcomed the sage and desiring to do Satsanga he requested him to narrate an incident from the Bhagavata Puran. But that day Narada was in no mood to narrate it, instead he started boasting about his victory over Kamadeva and how he had defeated lust and anger. So far so good! But didn't he score a 'self-goal' when he asked Mahadev's opinion about his conquest? Physical ailment can be easily recognised, and one can seek help of a doctor to treat it. But that is not the case with a psychopath. He does not understand that he is suffering from any illness. He thinks that he is hale and hearty, and that the other person has some issues.

This was exactly the situation with Narada. Instead of asking for medicine from Bhavavaidya, the destroyer of ignorance, Lord Shiva, he had asked a trifle thing such as his opinion about his victory. Lord Shiva understood the situation and, with folded hands and in all humility said, 'I request you not to sing your praise before Lord Vishnu, the way you have done before me.' Narada smiled to himself. On the other hand, Nandi and Bhringi were also trying to control their laughter. Narada thought that Lord Shiva was jealous of his achievement and hence he was saying this. In his mind he was sure that Lord Shiva had given him this advice, as he did not want Narada to gain name and fame amongst the Devatas. But why would Lord Shiva give wrong advice? All he wanted to say was that this story could be narrated in a different manner. Narada could have said that he could defeat lust only due to the blessings of Lord Vishnu. He could have said that he emerged victorious due to the continuous guidance given by Lord Vishnu to him and other devotees; all that Lord Shiva wanted to say was that Narada should not narrate the incident to Lord Vishnu in a self-gratifying manner, he should not say that he had achieved the feat on his own. The style of narration was not correct; but Narada had not paid a visit to Lord Shiva to seek advice, all he wanted was to boast about his achievements.

This is the mentality of people who like to be praised. Egotism makes a person blind, thus depriving him of the ability to introspect. Narada was now getting really impatient to narrate the incident to Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu, along with his wife Goddess Lakshmi was sitting on

his bed at his abode, the Kshir Sagar. Seeing Narada, Lord Vishnu stood up with folded hands and enquired about his well-being. He expressed surprise that Narada had visited after a long time and asked whether Narada was busy in some important work. Narada was just waiting for this question. No sooner the question was asked, than he started describing in detail his conquest of lust and anger, and how he forgave Kamadev and all the related events. Lord Vishnu immediately understood that Narada had been possessed by the vice called ego. And in his mind, he decided that his beloved devotee needed to be saved from this wickedness.

Now the question arises as to why Lord Vishnu did not tell Narada directly that it was incorrect to harbour egotism and that a spiritual aspirant should first renounce ego. But instead Lord Vishnu decided to subdue Narada's inflated ego in a unique way. It is easy to explain to a person who does not know that ego is a vice, but Narada was knowledgeable! The enlightened one! How does one tell him? And even if one told him directly, he could have drawn an entirely different conclusion, just as he did when Lord Shiva had tried to warn him. An extremely egoistic person easily gets trapped in the web of attachment. In spite of understanding that a particular thing is not good for him, when one cannot get rid of it, that is called attachment or temptation—one 'understands it' but is unable to 'implement it'. One deliberately goes on the wrong track. After narrating the story of his victory, when Narada told Lord Vishnu that 'this could be achieved only because of his blessings', he proved that along with ego he was also infected by the vice called hypocrisy. In his heart, the feeling was that 'I am so great that I am giving the credit of my victory to you'. When someone underplays his achievements, he actually means to say that he was great. Lord Vishnu took pity on Narada, who was largely consumed by ego, and in this way, mission 'Operation Narada' was put into action.

(*To be continued* ...)

Disciple: Is it possible for one to reach God if his Sraddha ceremony is performed in Gaya?

Mother: Yes, that is true.

Disciple: Then what is the necessity of spiritual practices?

Mother: These dead souls, no doubt, go to God and live there for sometime, but afterwards they are again born into the world according to their past desires. After their birth in a human body some of them obtain salvation in this life whereas others take inferior births to reap the results of their Karma. This world is moving around like a wheel. That is indeed the last birth, in which one gets completely rid of all desires. …

Disciple: What happens to those for whom no Sraddha ceremony is performed in Gaya?

Mother: They live in the spirit body until some fortunate ones born in their family perform the Sraddha ceremony in Gaya, or some other obsequy.

Disciple: We hear of ghosts and spooks. Are they the attendants of Shiva or simply spirits? Are they the spirits of dead people?

Mother: They are the spirits of the dead. The spirit-attendants of Shiva belong to a special group. One must live very carefully. Every action produces its result. It is not good to use harsh words towards others or be responsible for their suffering.

—Reminiscences of the Holy Mother (*The Vedanta Kesari*, Apr 1938)

Series

Features of a Holy Man

SWAMI JAPASIDDHANANDA

Abstract: Characteristic features of a holy man, *Sādhu*, culled from scriptures are poetically presented here. Composed in *śālinī*, of the *triṣṭup* metre, the poem consists of sixteen verses in Sanskrit. Endeavour is made, to bring out, especially the message of *Bhagavān Srī Rāmakṛṣṇa*[1] and *Swāmī Vivekānanda.*[2] The verses are also imbued with the light and insights received from the venerable monks of the holy Ramakrishna Order. Chief traits of a holy man apart, it gives the do's and don'ts for a Sadhu, an added feature. A close reading should give an overview of the nature and conduct of a holy man. Each verse has a catchphrase that carries a seminal message, and comes mostly at the end. The first stanza, for instance, rings the slogan: *mṛtyoḥ pāraṃ sādhur-etā,* 'holy man goes beyond death'. A list of the pithy phrases, for recapitulation, is given at the end.

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1. Seek Holy Company

नित्यं सेव्ये लोकजाले विशाले
सोऽयं सेव्यो बुद्धिदो युक्तकाले।
ज्ञानं भक्तिं योजयेद् योऽनुकूले
मृत्योः पारं साधुरेताऽऽत्ममूले ॥१॥

Translation: Given that you ought to deal with the vast *web* of human contacts day in and day out, it is better to seek the company of a holy man who can give good counsel at the right time, infuse favourable wisdom and devotion, and who goes beyond death within himself.

Notes:

1. *Sādhu* – 'holy man': The noun *Sādhu* generally means 'good-natured'. '*Sādhnoti dharmam* - one who upholds the universal norms of sustenance'[3] is the etymology. Lexicons give other derivations also, like '*sādhnoti parakāryaṃ paralokaṃ vā*—one who fulfils other's objectives, or attains to higher realm of existence'.[4] '*Sādhu'* is synonymous to holy man, saint, hermit, and recluse. In common understanding, the word denotes a monk, as evidenced in the Indian vernaculars. In this composition the word is not limited to that sense; *Sādhu* here simply means a man of God

or holy man in general, who, invariably is a good man, but not necessarily a formal renunciate. Thus, the word *Sādhu* here denotes the non-monastic spiritual men also, who are often as stringent in austerities as the traditional monks, if not more. A close study of the colossal personages like *Gopāler mā* (Aghormaṇī Devī), and *Nāga-mahāśaya* (Durgācharaṇa Nāg of East Bengal), both of the 19th Century, should suffice to bring home the point. In short, *Sādhu* here means a being who lives a God-centred life.

2. *Jñānaṃ bhaktiṃ yojayed yo'nukūle* - '(*Sādhu*) infuses favourable wisdom and devotion': The phrase can also mean 'blends favourable knowledge and devotion' by dint of the root *yuj* ('to join') in *yojayed*. Suggestive meaning, therefore, is that it calls for the ability to combine various spiritual disciplines. The rationale and methodology of achieving the combination is given by Swami Vivekananda in lectures like *The Way to the Realisation of a Universal Religion* (CW. Vol.2, pp.359-374). When it comes to spiritual unfoldment, it is highly desirable to hone all the faculties to that one end. Sri Ramakrishna prescribed his devotees a healthy blend of different modes of austerities, as it helps in keeping a tab on the umpteen vagaries of the mind, and engage all the energies in spiritual pursuit. Practice of a single spiritual discipline to the exclusion of others is meant only for the highly evolved souls like the *gopis* of Vrindavan. Seekers of that calibre are few and far between in modern times, and hence the need of optimum blending of various means. This message is captured here in the first verse: a *Sādhu* should be an adept in proper blending of varied spiritual disciplines. Though only two - *Jñāna* and *bhakti* - are mentioned here, all other methods could be subsumed into these major types.

3. *Mṛtyoḥ pāraṃ sādhuretā"tmamūle* - '*Sādhu* goes beyond death within himself': Two points are to be noted here.

   First, the word *Sādhu* stands for both the illumined soul, and the seeker on the path. A *Sādhu*, in the true sense of the term, is one who has *gone* beyond death, and *has reached* the shores of immortality. Such a holy man may not be readily available to all. It might be rather easier to find one who is on the way to *Sādhuhood*, well advanced in spiritual life, and close to God. The verbal form in future tense *etā* of the root '*iṇ gatau* - to go' allows room for such an interpretation. Thus, both the saint and the would-be-saint, are denoted by '*Sādhu'*, thereby making the verse pertinent to a wider circle.

   Second, the expression 'goes beyond death', has nothing to do with spatial travel. The word *ātmamūle* (in *"tmamūl* in the verse) is used to steer clear of the common misconception that illumination is achieved somewhere there out in the space. The term *ātmamūle*, therefore, conveys the fact that spiritual attainments are achieved within oneself, and not outside of oneself.

Lead to the next verse: Relevance of the holy company having been said, the exclusive benefits of keeping holy company are stated in the next verse.

2. Unmatched Benefit of the Holy Company

तीर्थे स्नाते शीर्यमाणस्य शुद्धिः
शास्त्रेऽधीते बुद्धिवाचां विशुद्धिः।
योगे युक्ते पापसन्दोह-विद्धिः
जुष्टे साधौ सर्वमाङ्गल्यसिद्धिः ॥२॥

Translation: Bath in holy waters purifies the body and mind; study of sciences purges the dross of the intellect and speech; *yoga* (absorption in the spiritual ideal) destroys heaps of sins; service to a holy man, however, brings all benediction and prosperity.

Notes:

1. *'Śīryamāṇasya'* by convention should mean 'of the body'. The etymology, however, is '*śīryate iti śarīram* - it gets destroyed, and hence is (known as) śarīram'. Here, in this composition, the word is used to convey both the body and mind, for, the mind too gets destroyed. It is a matter of common experience that when the body is weak, the mind becomes listless; and vice versa: when the mind is perturbed the body suffers. Body and mind are interdependent, a composite whole, and hence the familiar adage 'A sound mind in a sound body'.[5] Thus, the word *śīryamāṇa,* which means the physical body, may also refer to mind, by virtue of its etymology. Incidentally, taking bath in holy waters is seen to purify and calm down the mind also, at least for the moment.
2. Many words in Sanskrit language are untranslatable. *Śāstra*, for instance, is often rendered as 'scripture'. 'Science' may be a better option, though inadequate in many ways. The word *śāstra*, has a world of meaning around it; it includes the values of science, scripture, discipline, culture and much more. It is better, therefore, to keep the original word *śāstra*. *Māṅgalya*, again, is another wonder word. It is generally put as 'auspiciousness', which is a very poor representation of the multiple shades of meaning the word is imbued with, and the depth of sentiments it can bring to bear upon the reader. Alien terms, therefore, are best avoided. The original Sanskrit words can deliver the package of nuances unhampered, keeping into the bargain the brevity. It is interesting to note how Swamiji also pointed out to this inimitable capacity of the Sanskrit language while talking about *śraddhā*,[6] *ātman*[7] and the like.
3. *Sarvamāṅgalyasiddhiḥ* 'attainment of all benediction and prosperity': Men wrongly attribute prosperity to material abundance, political power, etc. Very few have the insight to see the energies working underneath the appearances. Spiritual power is the mainsource of all welfare and prosperity. *Dilīpa's* submission at the feet of *Vasiṣṭha,* and his expression of gratitude towards the sage, in *Raghuvaṃśa*, for instance, brings home this fact. *Dilīpa* confessed: 'It is due to your spiritual prowess that my subjects live their full life, free from all dangers and menace'.[8] God himself works through a holy man. Swamiji made it clear in one of his epistles written to a disciple in 1896, from Switzerland: 'Holiness is the highest and divinest power in earth and in heaven'.[9]

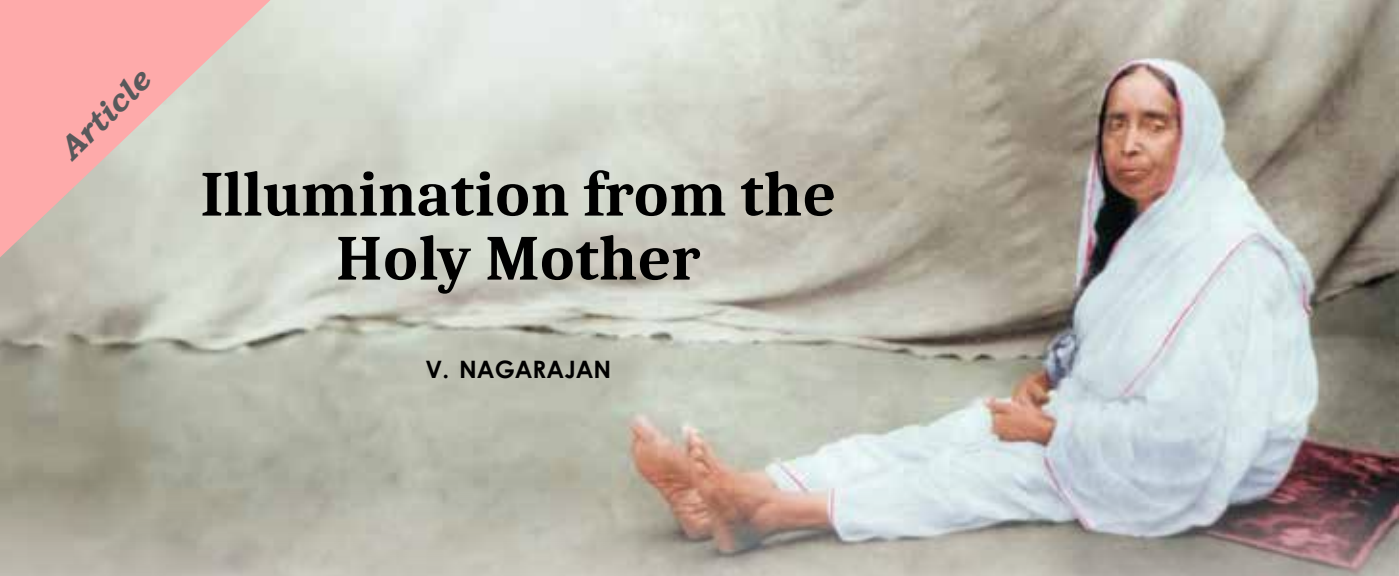
(*To be continued* ...)

References

1) Henceforth Sri Ramakrishna
2) Hereafter Swami Vivekananda or Swamiji
3) Dādhimatha, Sivadatta. Ed., *Amarakosa*, (Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 2011), p.251.
4) Dādhimatha, p.205.
5) See <blogs.fcdo.gov.uk>
6) *The Complete works of Swami Vivekananda (CW)*: 3.319.
7) *CW*: 3.126.
8) Jha, Ramachandra., Ed., *Raghuvaṃśamahākāvyam*, (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Krishnadas Academy, 2012).
   puruṣāyuṣajīvinyo nirātaṅkā nirītayaḥ/ yanmadīyāḥ prajāstasya hetustvad-brahmavarcasam // Canto 1, Verse 63, p.38.
9) *CW*: 8.382.

Article

Illumination from the Holy Mother



V. NAGARAJAN

It is customary for man to get dazzled by spectacular philosophies that take a lifetime to imbibe and apply in stages. And yet, it is the elegant and practical, apparently commonsensical instructions that facilitate the journey to gain abiding peace, tranquillity and joy. The Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi, consort of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, provides the spiritual tools to blessedness. As the quiet lighthouse, she provides the steady light-beam of guidance that instills love, faith and hope in sentient beings, who then learn to ride the waves in the Ocean of Impermanence: *samsāra*.

Women are the natural powerhouse of Nature. They can develop their latent potential, virtues and talents with ease. They can shine, benefitting and illuminating the home and world. It is not necessary for a woman to be married if she is not inclined to do so. Loving a human being leads to the experience of suffering, an aspect built into the very nature of all human relationships.

Worldly ties are impermanent as they are here today, then gone tomorrow. The real bond is with the Divine alone. The individual who can love the Divine alone is truly blessed. The higher love, directed towards the Divine does not lead to psychological suffering. When a woman has the burning fire of renunciation, she may choose the spiritual path. The quest becomes the way.

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The deer runs hither and thither in the woods in search of the source of the scent that it finds so enchanting. But the source of the scent (of musk) lies within its own body. Similarly, the source of happiness, joy and bliss lies within the individual. The Divine is ever-present in the human heart. As the individual does not know this, he runs continuously after pleasures in the objects of the world.

Man suffers as he is unable to grasp and hold on to the objects of the world. This suffering can be ended when man looks within and starts his inner journey. He gains closure, peace and bliss when he realises that the Divine alone is real, and all else are transitory and false. He finds his way in being engaged in the world without getting entangled in the relationships. He lives in the world, doing his duty with sincerity and care as needed; but in the depth of his heart, he loves God alone.

Each individual can worship the Divine in his own way. The rich can serve others with their wealth, by being generous and charitable. Those who lack wealth can pursue worship by repeating God's name incessantly. It is recommended never to be idle but to be engaged in some work

or the other. An empty mind falls prey to its defilements. There shall be errors in action. Regular chanting with meditation calms the restless mind, controls the senses and confers peace. The practice has its effect. The auspicious moment arrives suddenly, without any hint beforehand, and the subtle presence is felt.

The happiness of the world is transitory. One cannot hold on to anything. Reducing the attachment to the objects of the world is a wise move. This increases the peace of mind, which can also be increased by enhancing the purity of mind. Detachment from the world with progressive sensory disengagement paves the way for an intense attachment to the Divine. A daily practice with use of the rosary, with invocation audio-streams and rounds of chanting weans the mind away from the world, and slots it purposefully towards its true home: the Divine. The mind fixes on to 'the ideal' over time, becoming steady like a candle flame in a windless place. All the effort bears the fruit of tranquillity in daily life.

The stream of whims and fancies bring in constant discontent. When the restless wind of desire stops blowing, the flame of mental consciousness becomes steady. The mind becomes still and tranquil. Meditation is a great tool which makes the mind one-pointed. Just as a man catching fish is focused on his angling and does not notice a wedding procession passing by, the person who maintains his concentration in meditation is unaffected by sensory distractions of the world.

Having developed the discrimination between what is Real (*nitya*) and what is transient (*lila*), regularity comes in spiritual practices. The *sadhaka* remains steadfast in the journey of life. Over time, he realises that there is no treasure equal to *contentment* and no virtue equal to *fortitude*. He becomes a witness to the changes in life. Troubles and difficulties come and go like the flowing water under a bridge, even as he remains standing, still and unruffled.

Self-reflection leads to self-development. He puts efforts to correct his own faults and stops finding fault with others. It is natural for defilements to arise in the mind. It is in the mind that man feels 'pure or impure'. Looking at the moon, it can be seen that it has many spots and yet it provides cool and gentle light to all. Similarly, the individual may have imperfections at the present moment, but he can manifest the light of Divinity as far as possible and be a light to himself and others.

Life contains many shades of experiences. At times, suffering cannot be avoided. By sustained spiritual practices, one succeeds in reducing the intensity of suffering. The impact of misfortune becomes less. If an incident were to inflict a wound as wide as a ploughshare, it gets reduced to a pin-prick. The effect of *karma* is counteracted by *japa* and austerities. The individual who has grown through the spiritual practice has more patience, forbearance and resoluteness of will to overcome the situation. He has a positive outlook born out of surrendering to the Divine Will.

The Holy Mother concludes by elaborating on the significance of human efforts. She states that everything no doubt happens by the divine will, even as the winds of grace are ever-blowing in the universe, yet the individual must work because 'The Divine expresses its will through Man's action'. Thus, the individual continues his practice and marches ahead enthusiastically; gaining a life of peace and blessedness that shines and blossoms in due course of time ... Jai Ma!

Reference: Swami Srikantananda, *Sri Ma Sarada: Lead Us From Darkness to Light* (Hyderabad: Vivekananda Institute of Human Excellence, Ramakrishna Math, 2003)

Series

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Reminiscences of Sargachhi

SWAMI SUHITANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue ...)

05.07.62

Question: Maharaj, would you tell something about the early days of your monastic life?

Maharaj: I generally speak against visions but I can never forget what I saw with my eyes. I first saw Golap-Ma, broom-stick in hand, her hair dishevelled, sweeping the room. I asked Ganen Maharaj if I should offer my pranams to her. Ganen Maharaj replied, 'She has now become Mother Shitala with broomstick in her hand!' One day I saw Yogin Ma seated in an *asana* (yogic posture) near Sarat Maharaj. I had seen Gauri Ma in her ashrama, without teeth and having a *sindur* (vermilion) on her forehead. One day I saw Yogin Maharaj's wife (of premonastic life) in Belur Math. I remember distinctly that she had the appearance of a goddess – she looked just like our homely mother.

Swami Virajananda was the General Secretary (of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission) then. As soon as Sadhanananda returned from *tapasya*, he made him the head of Dhaka ashrama and brought me to the Belur Math. When we reached the Math, immediately he had me seated, gave me something to eat, and started saying, 'You had to undergo much hardship! Really, I could not send anyone (to help).' It was as if he was very much repentant! I was going out to wash my hands; he asked me to wash them right there. I was overwhelmed by his affection. Their behaviour was like this because they conducted themselves keeping Sri Ramakrishna as the ideal.

In contrast, some abbots keep their workers at a distance. They too have come to Sri Ramakrishna. The abbot is Sri Ramakrishna's representative – he has the whole responsibility of the novitiates. We are sannyasis; we do not have anything – our only possession is affection; and we have to run the show with that. Nowadays a lot of money is coming – they can show affection even by giving money. But somehow the affairs are disorderly.

07.07.62

Maharaj: If the society has no proper ideal to follow, its destruction is inevitable. The Brahmins and sannyasins should lead such disciplined lives that there remains no scope for even a little aberrance. That is why in the *Gita,* time and again the Lord emphasizes perfection in the performance of work and says – You will have to conduct yourself well along

The author, one of the Vice-Presidents of the Ramakrishna Order, presents here his conversations with Swami Premeshananda (1884–1967), a disciple of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi.

the right path for your own sake as well as for the sake of teaching the common man. Look at our everyday life – we live in such a way, in such an environment, that we have to mingle so much with householders – and therefore it is very difficult to hold on to the monastic spirit all the time.

The Holy Mother did not show her splendour much. Splendour was her ornament – not herself. He who wants to see her glory doesn't want the Mother. Had the common man seen her glory, they would have forgotten her; that is why she came to us in the garb of an ordinary poor Brahmin widow of the village with the appearance only of a 'mother' – she did this so that all feel intense attraction towards her, by the power of which all will be able to go out of this phenomenal world.

At the Hospital in Kolkata

Around the time of August, Maharaj suddenly developed acute headache and chest-pain. It was decided to take Maharaj to Berhampore town for treatment. The Head of the Ashrama, Swami Sukhadananda, and his assistant Anamayananda Maharaj made all the arrangements. An eye-specialist was brought from Kolkata for the terrible pain in his eyes. He said that glaucoma had developed and possibly he had lost his eyesight. That same night, Belur Math was contacted and Maharaj was taken to Kolkata. Revered Bharat Maharaj promptly arranged for his stay in a cabin in Calcutta Medical College. Treatment assuaged the pain in the eye but Maharaj lost his vision. Maharaj had to suffer terribly due to skin itching and urinary trouble—the overall picture was heart-rending. Another symptom also appeared – slowly his voice became feebler.

One day, we received news that Swami Madhavanandaji, the President of the Order, would come. Premesh Maharaj was informed. He became restless; he asked again and again when President Maharaj would come and where he would be seated. When the time of arrival came, he insisted his attendant to go downstairs to accompany him; Maharaj told him, 'Take my new wrapper; spread it over the stool in the lift—so many worldly minded people sit on it.' Madhavananda Maharaj left after seeing him for a few minutes.

A few days later, Prabhu Maharaj (Swami Vireswaranandaji), the then General Secretary, came to see him. He sat on a chair close to Maharaj. The attendant had to remain there to help them understand each other's conversation.

Prabhu Maharaj: Where will you like to stay after being discharged from the hospital? If you want, we will arrange for your stay at Belur Math. If you choose to go back to Sargachhi – that will be arranged. And if you so desire, there is Sevashrama at Kashi – Lord Vishwanath is there; arrangements can be made there also.

Premesh Maharaj: Please send me to Swargashrama (where the sadhus sustain themselves by begging). I will recover if I eat the roti and dal of Punjabi alms-houses there and spend my time in spiritual practices.

Prabhu Maharaj was astounded to see the mental strength of the old and emaciated Maharaj who had lost his ability to move, see and speak. He said, as if to pacify a baby: 'Maharaj, you won't have to worry – we will fix it up.'

Maharaj: That is good.

Having been affected by uric acid, diabetes, blood pressure, etc., Maharaj used to remain silent most of the time. He would not remain aware of place, time and surroundings. He would not recognize even familiar persons properly. Yet whenever the attendant asked him any spiritual question, he answered it beautifully. He would explain the point nicely by quoting verses from the Gita, Upanishads,

Bhagavata and the poems of Rabindranath. One day the attendant asked him out of curiosity: 'Maharaj, occasionally you are confused regarding events, topics and environment; but I find no confusion as regards spiritual matters. What is the reason?'

Maharaj: You note this – confusion takes place in the mind and intellect only. No confusion occurs in the concepts beyond the domain of intellect.

25.11.62

Maharaj: Sannyasins and householders can never stay together. The two are totally different. For householders the world is acceptable; we sannyasis have to renounce it. The sannyasi has no connection with temples or mosques. However, our authorities have set up the Belur Math with a different objective. It is for the common masses to offer worship and meditate in the temple; besides, it is for the sake of the new-comer brahmacharins. The public will worship and meditate here.

The householders ask us, 'How are you?' We also say, 'We are all right.' This is not at all a matter to laugh at. We do not say it jokingly also. It is because we are what we are. It does not matter whether this body remains or goes. These things are secret; not to be disclosed to others. If disclosed, it will harm them as they will not be able to grasp the spirit. Even persons with extreme sense of renunciation, should not be apprised of these things.

After staying in Calcutta Medical College for nearly a month and a half, Maharaj started for Varanasi by Amritsar Mail on 28 November 1962. When he was leaving the Medical College, it was quite a scene. On both the sides stood people, nurses, officials, a number of doctors, monks, and devotees. Some of them were eager to touch the vehicle carrying Maharaj. Anyway, Maharaj was taken to Howrah Station by an ambulance. There was a crowd of sadhus and brahmacharins there. Many were wondering—this was the last goodbye. The railway officials also took active part in this ceremonial service.

The next day, Maharaj reached Kashi Sevashrama. Buddha Maharaj, the ashrama head, came and offered pranams. At that time there were overall thirty sadhus in both the ashramas (Sevashrama and Advaita Ashrama) who were either Holy Mother's or Raja Maharaj's disciples. All were distressed to see Maharaj's physical condition.

[Note: Sargachhi reminiscences end here. Here onwards Varanasi reminiscences begin.]

(*To be continued* ...)

'Japa is the antidote for attachment. Even if you feel no attraction for the Lord now, you will become drawn to Him just by repeating His name. As the wind removes the cloud, so the name of God destroys the cloud of worldliness that overcasts the mind. The natural tendency of the mind is to run this way and that. Repeating the Divine name is calculated to direct the mind to God.'

—Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi

A Change of Fortune

GITANJALI MURARI

A fictional narrative based on incidents from the childhood of Sri Ramakrishna.

At the crack of dawn, a bullock-cart trundled into the front yard and Ramkumar loaded his luggage into it. 'Take care of your health,' Chandramani said, 'and write often.'

Ramkumar touched her feet and turned to his brothers. 'Do be serious about work,' he told Rameshwar, 'I'll try to send money as soon as possible but until then you must put in more effort, and Gadai—'

'You've already told me a hundred times Dada,' Gadai smilingly interrupted, 'I promise you I'll look after Ma.'

Ramkumar blinked back tears. After the passing away of their father, he had managed to provide for the family but then, as is the natural course of things, his luck changed. His wife passed away leaving behind an infant son and his regular work dwindled. To make matters worse, Rameshwar didn't show much inclination to earn, preferring to spend time discussing the scriptures with religious scholars. Eventually, Ramkumar was forced to borrow money to meet the household expenses. The debts piled up. Desperate to repay them, he looked for work in faraway Calcutta and at long last secured a teacher's position.

'You are in charge now,' he told Rameshwar.

'Lord Raghuvir is,' Rameshwar smiled, 'as he's always been.'

The family struggled to find its bearings after Ramkumar's departure. While Rameshwar began to earn a little, his young wife along with Gadai, assisted Chandramani in household chores. But the burden of taking care of Ramkumar's child fell on Chandramani and she was getting old. Handling a bouncy baby exhausted her. Noticing her distress, Gadai stepped into the breach. 'You should be in school,' she said, watching him play with Akshay one day, 'go on now, leave him with me.' 'I'm not going anywhere Ma,' Gadai laughed, 'Ramkumar dada told me I could skip school whenever I felt like it.'

Chandramani shook her head. She would never understand Gadai's ways. His infinite patience with the baby was a quality rarely seen in an adolescent boy. He modelled animals out of clay to amuse Akshay, sang to him and even rocked him to sleep. Then he ran errands, never appearing tired or sullen. Still, she reflected, he must miss his solitary wanderings. As if he had read her mind, Gadai turned a beaming face towards her.

'Ma, the weather is perfect for a long walk. Shall I take Akshay with me to Sarvamangala's house?' 'Go son,' Chandramani smiled, 'and don't hurry back. I'll be fine.'

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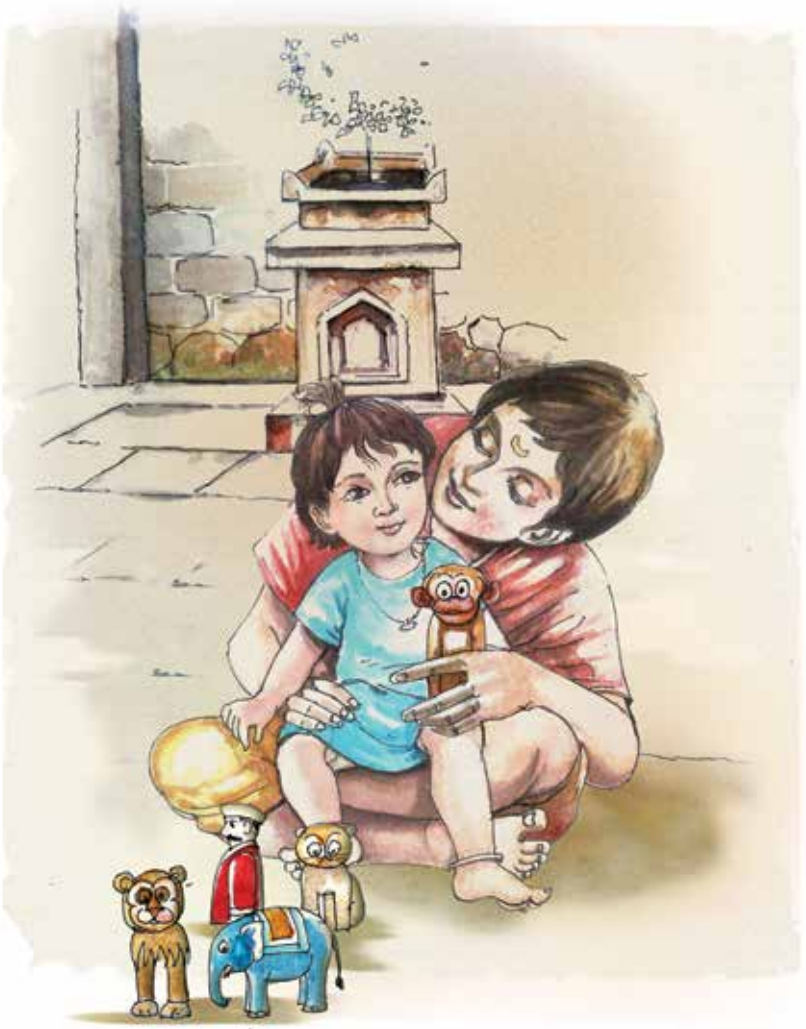

Strapping Akshay to his chest, Gadai set off and reached his sister's house by noon. Overjoyed at their arrival, Sarvamangala bustled about, serving a variety of refreshments. Gadai marvelled at the change in her. The loving indulgence made her seem much older than her years. 'Say my name,' she cooed to the baby, 'Sarva-manga-la,' and to her delight, Akshay babbled out the last syllable, la.

At lunch, Sarvamangala took special care of her husband, offering him only those dishes that he liked best. Gadai looked on, struck by her wifely devotion and on returning home, began to paint a picture of the happy couple. Chandramani took her grandson on her lap. A profound peace filled her heart. Despite their troubles, life had once again found its rhythm.

Gadai finished the painting and held it up for her to see. 'They're so lifelike,' she exclaimed, 'as if they'll speak any moment.' Akshay chortled, pointing a chubby finger at the painting.

'What is it dear nephew?' asked Gadai and 'La-la,' came the baby's prompt reply.

Learning to Control the Mind—Its Urgency

SWAMI PRABUDDHANANDA

We all know that the mind is an important instrument in our day to day life. Without the mind we cannot operate. Everywhere it is the play of the mind going on. Life can be viewed in many angles. Sometimes we say it is a play of Energy or play of God. But more easily we can say that it is the play of the mind. If something happens to that instrument the whole thing is upset. If I am upset the whole day is gone. So, the mind is an important instrument, an instrument of the soul. Hence, it has to be kept in proper condition. That means in good working condition. That is our aim. What is that 'good'? Each one has his own definition.

When does one's spiritual life begin? For this, one of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna said, 'It begins when we are in *nirvikalpa samadhi*, that is when we are in superconscious state'. That means when we are really in the spirit, that is spiritual life. But if we are not in the spirit, then where are we? We are in the mind, in the mental world all the time. When we say we are leading a spiritual life it is actually our psychological life or mental life. **मन एव मनुष्याणां कारणं बन्धमोक्षयोः**—One of the minor Upanishads says that mind alone is the cause for everything in this life, the life of bondage and the life of freedom, it is all the mind and all the different aspects of the mind. So we are handling that operation of the mind.

योगश्चित्त वृत्ति निरोधः—*yoga* is controlling or regulating the ripples in the mind. How to handle this? Controlling does not mean killing them. It is to operate them properly and that is Yoga. We should learn that constantly. If we do it more consciously we call it yoga or spiritual life. Even if we do it unconsciously, there will be improvement in our lives. When we think of some of the books such as *How to Say No*, *How to Stop Worrying* and *How to Win Friends*, in all these, we find the different ways of handling the mind. We find the same thing in schools and colleges, in monasteries, and in the Himalayan caves. So everywhere it is the operation of the mind that we find. How intelligently we operate it determines our success in life.

Usually in spiritual circles the mind does not have a good name. There is a famous example of a restless monkey. The mind is like a restless monkey. Not only restless, it is also drunk and then that is not enough, it is stung by a scorpion, and in addition to that a ghost enters into it. What may be the state of such a monkey! The mind is like that monkey. It is very difficult to control or kill it. To kill it means to stopping it from wavering. When we meditate

This article is an edited transcription of the talk by Swami Prabuddhananda, former minister-in-charge of the Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco; Transcription and initial editing by Smt Shashikala Sreedhar, Bangalore.

we are employing the mind and we try to stop all working of the mind. In one of the Advaita Vedanta books, it is still more severe—**मनोनाश:**—destroying or killing the mind. The leader of the mind is Ego. To get rid of this ego we say kill this ego. When we are tired of controlling the mind we often think how nice it would be to get rid of it. So, on the whole, mind has a bad name. Something must be done to it. Scriptures say that we have to transcend our mind.

Sri Shankaracharya says that mind is a thief. This thief roams about freely and makes efforts to break into houses, to rob everything. What does it rob? By attaching itself it robs us of our freedom. It binds us and takes away our wisdom, the highest wisdom, the Truth. Acharya prays to Lord Shiva who is also called as **तस्करपते**, which means Lord of thieves, to put this thief (our mind) under His control.

चञ्चलं हि मन: कृष्ण—Arjuna tells Krishna that the mind is restless, turbulent, unruly and asks Krishna what is to be done and how to control it. Krishna summarises in these two words: *Abhyaasa*, that mind control should be practised repeatedly and then only it gets fixed, and *Vairaagya*, the thirst through discrimination.

There is a good side of this mind too. *Mana eva kaaranam bandha mokshayoh*—the mind alone is the cause of bondage and freedom. Through a controlled and purified mind we can realise the Truth, realise our Self and the supreme abode of undisturbed peace and Love: **तद्विष्णो: परमं पदम्**. So it comes to this point that the mind has to be properly used. Everything can be achieved through the mind—**मनसैवेदम् आप्तव्यम्**. So we have to always keep it in a good cooperative condition. Otherwise, if it rebels against us there will be problems at every step. Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi once told a devotee to keep the mind calm to practise spiritual disciplines.

Now let us find out what the modern thinkers, rishis, seers and scientists, say about controlling of the mind. According to many of the modern psychologists, mind and spirit are not different. Frank Bluntly, a psychologist, does not believe that there is anything like spirit. Whereas mystics, the spiritual masters, have a different view. Mind is entirely different from the spirit, the Atman, or consciousness. The Sanskrit word *Jada* means inert. It is a technical term. It is matter. The mind is subtle and fine matter. Mind is unconscious. Consciousness is supplied by the Self, the spirit. Spirit is the only source of light, energy, strength and wisdom. Everything comes from the spirit—call it consciousness or Self or God. Mind is a reflector. It reflects the spirit or consciousness. So the Atman is the impeller according to the Upanishads. It guards the mind like the mahout who guards elephants. Because of the light of the Atman the mind shines.

For our ancestors, understanding themselves better was their pleasant luxury. But nowadays learning to control the mind may have become a greater priority for survival. It is of greater urgency now. In spiritual life we talk about discrimination between the permanent and impermanent, good and bad, what is duty and what is not duty—the capacity to sort it out is very necessary. For this we have to practise hard. Nowadays there are hundreds of true things and hundreds of fake things. So we have to exercise more of our power of discrimination. Hence the ability to control the mind has become a greater priority.

But then how to control the mind? There are two methods. One is from the outside and the other from inside. Different kinds of sciences, sociology, physical science and educational

sciences are used to control the mind from outside with external pressure and social pressure. But we want to do it in a natural, painless, systematic way like how children are controlled and disciplined. The mind needs ordered information to keep itself in order. As long as it has clear goals and receives feedback, consciousness keeps humming along. For this, games, sports and ceremonial rituals are some of the most satisfying activities. Even the experiences of working at a job has this characteristic of order and continuity. When these are missing, chaos returns. Mind will be in a chaotic condition. That is why we need a job. The jobless state is a very dangerous state to ourselves as well as to others. That is why we should work.

If you put it in a more socially comfortable term, it is our duty. Duty is a very desirable discipline. If that goes away, chaos returns. If more unemployed people join together, they create havoc. Another relevant finding is that people report feeling more listless and dissatisfied when they are alone and have nothing to do. Being alone itself is bad enough but having nothing to do is the worst. Paradoxically, it is when we are ostensively most free, when we can do anything we want to, that we are least able to act. Often we don't accept these things. But psychologists and other teachers who possess insight into human minds can see this. That is why even in our spiritual circles like our monasteries, if someone wants to be alone and wants to do a lot of meditation, our seniors used to say, 'Wait, let the mind come under control a little and later on you can do. Now follow the routine'. We may get annoyed but there is a meaning to it. If externally rules and conventions are not there we do much less.

One of the senior monks of the Order used to say that if he wanted to allot some additional work, he used to give it to the person who was busy and get it done fast and not to the person who was more free. Because a person who is more free is less inclined to act. The drive from inside will not be there. They need some external thing to wake them up. In these situations, the mind tends to drift and sooner or later it hits upon some painful thought or harmful desire, or some painful thinking of past mistakes. When we are alone we brood over past mistakes or unfulfilled desire and keep worrying that in spite of doing so much, nothing has happened in our case and that no one appreciates us. In such circumstances most of us are unable to just pull ourselves up and think instead, of something useful and cheerful. So a busy person will do better and he will not have time to worry about his past deeds.

When pressure is put on us by society or by just need of the time we do much better. A decision gives the mind a new direction. The unpleasant thoughts that are received below the threshold of awareness and all the worries go behind when there is something to do. Ironically most people who work, experience a more enjoyable state of mind than those who do not. At work it is usually clear as to what needs to be done and there is clear information about how well one is doing. Yet, few people would willingly work more and have less free time. Generally unnoticed is the fact that the work we want to avoid is actually more satisfying than the free time. But at the same time one must try to balance his work time and free time. But what is important here is the condition of the mind. There is a reasonable evolutionary explanation for this condition too.

It is probably better that we need ordered external input structure which is right. We need it for our growth to keep the mind in order. Otherwise the mind would have done lot more mischiefs to others as well as to us. This way we ensure some congruency between objective and subjective realities. The fact that the mind

experiences unpleasant disorder when not engaged in goal directed action, is an important safety feature. Otherwise what would have happened if we were not like that? We would not have grown. There will be stagnation. Hence this evolution is necessary.

Now there are two ways of avoiding drift of consciousness, usually experienced as a painful sensation, either of anxiety or boredom. One is to impose order on the mind from outside. On the other hand, when we come to spiritual life we rebel against that. Because in spiritual life we are all struggling for freedom. We do not like anything that is put from outside. It should be voluntary. So that is the difficulty that we find here.

In the former way one is to impose order on the mind from outside by getting involved in a task or talking with another person or watching a TV programme which will structure our attention and it can help us follow a more or less linear pattern.

The other way to achieve order is to develop an internal discipline that makes it possible to concentrate at will. Internally if we do not need pressure then that is maturity. One of the characteristics of such a matured person is his ability to carry on his own work without being supervised. We should work without being ordered, treating it as a duty. It should be entirely voluntary and should come from within. This is much more difficult and it takes many years to learn. Here we have to put pressure on ourselves. There are innumerable ways for achieving the goal. But all of them involve developing personally chosen habits. In this we should follow a systematic methodology. It won't work if we go in a haphazard way. So, our internal discipline is our spiritual life. This is called 'yoga', it means educating oneself.

Hence learning to control the mind means learning to educate the mind. One should educate the mind through reasoning in different ways. If a job is to be done it should be done in a *sattvik* way. We must tell our mind that everything will be alright. One can achieve that by constantly educating the mind. Krishna says the same to Arjuna in the Gita when Arjuna says that it is very difficult to control the wavering mind. Krishna summarises in two words. *Abhyasa*: practice, it should be done repeatedly; only then things get fixed. Another is *Vairagya*, the thirst through discrimination. One should rise with *Trishna*: dispassion.

Now comes the fruit of all these. The mind becoming more and more matured means that the mind has become really educated. The benefit of this is that we do things well, we get rid of problems that are bothering us physically, mentally or even spiritually. In Vedanta all these problems put together are called by one word—*bandhana* or bondage. That means we are caught. That is the basic problem. Here an educated mind comes to our help and releases us from this bondage. It frees us from that bondage and results in our realisation of the Self which is the goal of doing all this sadhana. If not, an uneducated mind puts us in bondage.

So for this we should go deep inside more and more. As a result, the mind becomes more and more matured. At this stage we have to dispense with the mind and realise that the mind is only an instrument and that the spirit is the user of that instrument. Earlier, the mind used us; now we use our mind. That means winning freedom over mind. A man of realisation uses the mind, and is not used by the mind. So realising oneself results in establishing the real independence. When somebody asked one of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, 'Why are you getting angry?', his reply was , 'No! I use my anger'.

The Salt Doll and the Sea

(Based on the stories told by Sri Ramakrishna)

CHANDRAKANT PRADHAN

The little Salt Doll was perched on a stone on the sea shore. The waves were storming the big stone. And thoughts were surging in her small head. She was restless. And so was the sea. 'What is this sea? How deep is it? What is its expanse? What is its mystery? Who can give me the answer?' Ultimately, she could contain the thoughts no longer. And at that very moment Gurudeva appeared. Now when it comes to Gurudeva, there is no use asking the question as to where he came from. Who told him he was needed? When any of his innumerable *chelas* (disciples) needed him he appeared there instantly. It was not for nothing that he was known as *smartrigami*—going instantly where he is remembered.

'Child, what is tormenting your little head? What are you engrossed in thinking about?' flowed out words from Gurudeva's mouth, churned from nectar as it were.

Placing her head on Gurudeva's lotus feet, she humbly said, 'As if you don't know, Gurudeva! The Sea calls me all the time. But it hides itself from me. My head is swirling. What is this Sea? What mysteries does it hold? Can I ever know the Sea?' She said sobbing, 'I can no longer hold my life and the unkind Sea won't open up. Gurudeva, I have surrendered myself unto you. Please show me the way.'

'Have heart, my child,' said Gurudeva in a voice deep like thunder. 'The time has come for you to know the answer. But I won't spoon-feed you. It won't be in your interest, child. I will show you the way, and be the lighthouse to guard you against dangers. But you will have to undertake the journey and face all the dangers and roadblocks on the way. Go ahead. Keep going to the Sea. And have complete faith that you will succeed in your undertaking. God bless you.' Saying this he placed his hand on her head. Bowing to him once again, she entered into the Sea, without looking back. Soon she disappeared. Nothing happened for a while. The atmosphere was filled with the noise of the roaring sea.

After a while, Gurudeva asked, 'Are you there my child?' A wave splashed against Gurudeva's lotus feet and murmured, 'Yes Gurudeva. I am here, there and everywhere.' 'Have you found the answer?' 'By Your Grace, Yes Gurudeva. Now I know I am the answer. I am the Sea whom I wanted to know about. And I have always been Him right from the beginning all along. Only a thick curtain separated me from being Him. The curtain has melted and I am He. Now no more questions. Only profound calmness.'

And there was profound silence on the sea shore also. The wave receded. Only some seagulls were seen going in circles silently.

Gurudeva smiled unto himself, his face beaming with satisfaction. 'Good, one job is done successfully. Thousand other calls to attend to before I receive the Final Call.'

And he disappeared from there and went back to where he had come from.

The Doll, the One who wanted to know, was already merged with the Sea. Since the knower was not there, knowledge also took a retreat. Only Sea remained—Self-conscious, eternal, omnipresent, unending, seamless Sea. The waves on it were chanting the eternal Sound OM.

The author is based in Pune.

Arithmetic—Playing with the Numbers

ANKIT ARORA

Today, in schools, after an introduction to the decimal system, we learn to combine the numbers using operations like addition, subtraction, multiplication and division as the basic building blocks of any transactional calculation. The branch of mathematics, which deals with numbers and their properties under standard operations is known as Arithmetic and constitutes an elementary part of modern mathematics. Sir Isaac Newton (1670 CE), a great physicist and mathematician, mentioned that the arithmetic of the decimal system provides a model for developing operations like addition, multiplication, root extraction, etc. with algebraic expressions in variables like polynomials and power series.

After the invention of decimal system in its oral form in Vedic period, as its logical extension, our Vedic seers went on to combine these numbers using several operations. Various references in the Vedic texts show that the fundamental operations of arithmetic were well-known at that time. For instance, in a certain metaphysical context, it is mentioned in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* that when a thousand is divided into three equal parts, there is a remainder one. Another remarkable allegory in this text lists all the factors of 720, like 720 ÷ 2 = 360; 720÷3 = 240; up to 720 ÷ 24 = 30.

An arithmetic formation called a sequence is an enumerated collection of objects which follows a certain pattern, like arithmetic sequence has a common difference while geometric sequence has a common ratio. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* mentions correctly, the sum of an arithmetical progression: (24 + 28 + 32 + to ... 7 terms) = 756. The *Pañcaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa* describes a list of sacrificial gifts forming a geometrical series 12, 24, 48, 96, 192... 49152, 98304, 196608, 393216. A numerical example of a geometric sequence can be seen in the Jain treatise *Kalpasūtra* (300 BCE) of *Bhadrabāhu* as 1 + 2 + 4 + ... + 8192 = 16383. The incidental occurrences of correct sums of such series in non-mathematical texts suggest that general formulae for series were known at least from the time of the *Brāhmaṇa*s.

These arithmetic operations are described in post-Vedic treatises, wherein the Vedic concepts were elaborated by mathematicians like *Āryabhaṭṭa* (499 CE) and *Brahmagupta* (628 CE) under a common heading of *gaṇita* i.e., mathematics. Arithmetic as a separate branch of mathematics first appeared formally in the works of *Śrīdhara* (750 CE) under the title *Pāṭīgaṇita* (the other being *bījagaṇita* or algebra), where he discussed the fundamental operations and practical problems of *pāṭīgaṇita*. The concepts of arithmetic operations were further refined by *Bhāskara* in his systematic compilation *Līlāvatī* (1150 CE). Written in elegant but plain Sanskrit and organised well, the *Līlāvatī* became the most popular textbook of *pāṭīgaṇita* in India. Later, *Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍit* (1356 CE) in his works included more practical problems and investigated new mathematical progressions, some of which turned out to be useful for his successors like *Mādhava* (1400 CE) to obtain power series for π, sine, cosine, etc.

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Vivekananda Way

ISSUE 67

Series 5: Understanding India - through Swami Vivekananda's eyes

In this series we understand India through Swami Vivekananda's eyes, and thereby build a deeper appreciation of the country. We explore the key messages of the 'Lectures from Colombo to Almora', delivered by Swami Vivekananda on his return from the West.

This is the 4th Issue on the lecture "The Vedanta", delivered in Lahore on 12th November 1897.

Focus in this issue:

The Vedanta - part 4

In this issue, we continue our exploration of the lecture: The Vedanta (at Lahore):

1 Every being has his own reserves of strength, power and purity

– According to Swami Vivekananda, every one of us, every being, has his own reservoir of strength, infinite power, infinite purity, infinite bliss and existence infinite. Our bodies are the locks hindering us from expressing what we really are to the fullest. As our bodies become more and more finely organised – Tamoguna to Rajoguna to Sattvaguna, more and more of this power and purity become manifest.

Therefore, Indian people have been so careful about eating, drinking, and the food question. Over time the original ideas may have been lost in practice, but this is the underlying principle. Swami Vivekananda says the same is true of our marriage system of yore. He also says that 'we have made a caricature of these ideas in our practice.'

Every one of us, every being, has as his own background such a reservoir of strength, infinite power, infinite purity, infinite bliss, and existence infinite—only these locks, these bodies, are hindering us from expressing what we really are to the fullest.

2 The idea of the Atman

– The great idea of the Atman is believed by every one of the sects in India. However there are differences in formulation. The dualists believe that the Atman becomes Sankuchita (i.e. all its power and nature becomes contracted) and by good works the nature is expanded again. On the other hand, the Advaitist says that the Atman never expands or contracts, but seems to do so. However, all believe that the Atman has all powers already, not that anything will come to it from outside.

– Thus, the Vedas are not inspired but *expired* – not that they come from anywhere outside, but they are eternal laws living in every soul. The Vedas are in the soul of the ant, in the soul of the god. The ant has only to evolve and get the body of a sage or a rishi, and the Vedas will come out, eternal laws expressing themselves.

...Believe in the possibility of everybody—that even in the lowest man there is the same possibility as in the Buddha. This is the doctrine of the Atman.

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3 Swami Vivekananda then puts forward the powerful arguments made by Buddhists against Dualism, and the counter arguments from Advaita which demolish the Buddhistic arguments

WHAT DUALISM SAYS:

1. Dualism begins with this premise - there is the body, there is the fine body (mind), there is this Atman, and in and through all Atman is the Paramatman, God.
2. In the dualistic doctrine, the Atman and Paramatman are both called substance, to which the mind and body and so-called substances adhere like so many qualities.
3. Furthermore, the Dualists have a God who is omnipresent, and yet creates without hands, moves without feet, and so on. This God has created the universe, as a Kumbhakâra (potter) creates a Ghata (pot).

So far we have seen that the idea of dualism is all right; for there is the body, there is then the fine body—the mind—there is this Atman, and in and through all the Atmans is that Paramâtman, God.

WHAT THE BUDDHIST SAYS:

1# ARGUMENT AGAINST SUBSTANCE

- The Buddhists analyze the body into a material stream and equally analyze the mind into another stream. They say that the Atman is unnecessary, and there are only Gunas and qualities.
- The Buddhist puts forth the doctrine of Kshanikavada, i.e. whatever exists is a succession of mental currents and nothing more. They do not adhere to each other, they do not form a unit, one is chasing the other, like waves in the ocean, never forming one unit - whole. Man is a succession of waves, and when one goes down it generates another, and the cessation of these wave forms is called Nirvana.
- Buddhists say, nobody has ever seen a substance, none can conceive it; therefore what is the use of thinking of that substance.

Nobody has ever seen a substance, none can ever conceive; what is the use of thinking of this substance? Why not become a Kshanikavâdin and say that whatever exists is this succession of mental currents and nothing more? They do not adhere to each other, they do not form a unit, one is chasing the other, like waves in the ocean, never complete, never forming one unit-whole. Man is a succession of waves, and when one goes away it generates another, and the cessation of these wave-forms is what is called Nirvana.

2# ARGUMENT AGAINST A CREATOR

– The Buddhist also asks how the dualist can prove the existence with the conception of a God and his Gunas, and an infinite number of souls which are substance and each soul an individual.

The idea of a God that is omnipresent, and yet is a person who creates without hands, and moves without feet, and so on, and who has created the universe as a Kumbhakâra (potter) creates a Ghata (pot), the Buddhist declares, is childish, and that if this is God, he is going to fight this God and not worship it. This universe is full of misery; if it is the work of a God, we are going to fight this God. ...

3# ARGUMENT AGAINST INDIVIDUALITY

– The Buddhists also argue against the very concept of individuality.

– They say that at a physical level, every element of your body is ever changing and may in elemental form move from one individual entity to another.

– At a mental level too we are ever changing, where then is the individual?

– Nor is individuality at the level of consciousness, Ahamkara, because it only covers a small part of existence. For example, all my organs are working, but I am not conscious of it.

...each soul an individual? In what are you an individual? You are not as a body, for you know today better than even the Buddhists of old knew that what may have been matter in the sun has just now become matter in you, and will go out and become matter in the plants; then where is your individuality, Mr. So-and-so? The same applies to the mind. Where is your individuality? You have one thought tonight and another tomorrow. You do not think the same way as you thought when you were a child; and old men do not think the same way as they did when they were young. Where is your individuality then?

4# ARGUMENT AGAINST THE END-STATE OF DUALISM

– Further, the Buddhist argues that dualism teaches man to be a coward and to seek help from outside. Dualism creates a self hypnosis of people who become weak by repeating these weak ideas.

Says the Buddhist to the Vaishnava, if your ideal, your aim and goal is to go to the place called Vaikuntha where God lives, and there stand before Him with folded hands all through eternity, it is better to commit suicide than do that.

5# ARGUMENT AGAINST A FEAR-BASED RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

- The Buddhist also argues that along with the fear of a Personal God comes priest craft & intercession, and subsequently tyranny.

So long as man thinks he has to cower before a supernatural being, so long there will be priests to claim rights and privileges and to make men cower before them, while these poor men will continue to ask some priest to act as interceder for them.

6# ARGUMENT AGAINST AN EXTERNAL CONSCIOUSNESS

- The Buddhist agrees that everything is the result of the law of Karma.
- The belief in an infinity of souls and that souls are without birth or death is agreed upon by the Buddhists.
- However the Buddhist disagrees on the need for an external consciousness.

The Hindu says the Karma is Jada (inert) and not Chaitanya (Spirit), therefore some Chaitanya is necessary to bring this cause to fruition. Is it so, that Chaitanya is necessary to bring the plant to fruition? If I plant the seed and add water, no Chaitanya is necessary. You may say there was some original Chaitanya there, but the souls themselves were the Chaitanya, nothing else is necessary. If human souls have it too, what necessity is there for a God, as say the Jains, who, unlike the Buddhists, believe in souls and do not believe in God.

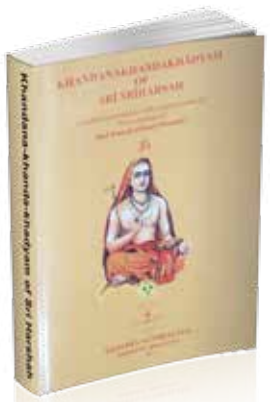
7# ARGUMENT AGAINST THE VERACITY OF THE VEDAS

- The Buddhist says that the Tripitakas are as much a product of 'revelation' of an eternal truth as the Vedas. Therefore, no special importance should be given to the words of the Vedas.

You may quote the Vedas, but he does not believe in them. He will say, "My Tripitakas say otherwise, and they are without beginning or end, not even written by Buddha, for Buddha says he is only reciting them; they are eternal." And he adds, "Yours are wrong, ours are the true Vedas, yours are manufactured by the Brahmin priests, therefore out with them." How do you escape?

TO BE CONTINUED...

In the next issue, we cover Swami Vivekananda's counter arguments from Advaita, which demolish the Buddhistic arguments...



KHANDANA-KHANDA-KHADYAM OF SRI HARSHAH.

English Translation with copious notes by Dravidacharya Shri Ramakrishnan Swamiji

Shastra Nethralaya, No.1, Atma Vigyan Bhavan, Baba Kali Kambli, Ramnagar, Pasholok Post, Rishikesh, Uttarakhand - 249201; 2018; paperback; pp.196; price not mentioned.

Khandana-khanda-khadyam, of Sri Sriharsha, together with the *Advaitasiddhi* of Sri Madhusudana Sarasvati and *Chitsukhi* of Sri Chitsukha Munih form the triad of the highest order of texts studied in the philosophy of Non-dualism.

This work is mainly aimed at establishing the pure self-luminous consciousness or Brahman as the only reality by refuting all the arguments put forward by the Nyaya-Vaiseshika schools to support the reality of the pramanas and the prameyas. It attempts to prove that all empirical experiences and their objects are only conventional relative truths and not real in the ultimate sense. In this text, Sri Sriharsha utilises the principle of khandana or negative and destructive criticism to defend Advaita Vedanta. Written in the 12th century, it is a polemical treatise directed against the realists in general and the Naiyayikas in particular.

According to Advaita Vedanta, the world being of the nature of maya is undefinable i.e., it cannot be categorised as either real or unreal but has a relative existence. To prove this Sri Sriharsha attacked all Nyaya definitions and refuted them. The method of dialectic was of taking a concept or a category of a realist and showing that such a thing cannot have self nature (existence in itself) but depends on many conditioning factors to make it capable of being treated as one whole. For example, knowledge cannot be defined without defining a knower and the known and these in turn cannot be defined without defining knowledge, etc. This is such a potent dialectical work, that it destroyed the philosophical assumptions of Vaisesika and Nyaya. Thereafter Nyaya became more a school of logic than of philosophy. Rather the book is so famous among Naiyayikas themselves that the founder of Navya-nyaya school, the great Raghunath Siromani wrote a commentary on Khandana-khanda-khadya. It is one of the best works produced in Indian vada tradition.

The book has four chapters, each chapter condemning different aspects of the Nyaya philosophy. They are: 1) Pramana-tadabhasa-aniruktih, which condemns the pramanas; 2) Nigrahasthana-aniruktih, which points out the

places where the opponent falters in the text and is not able to hold on to the philosophical thought; 3) Sarvanamartha-aniruktih, where only a pronoun like *kim* is used; and 4) Avisheshalakshana-aniruktih, where the whole of the definition is negated.

The 'arguments of refutation' begin with the refutation of the logician's explanation of the Right Cognition. Every one of the definitions proposed by several writers on Nyaya is taken up, examined and found defective. Similar refutations follow of Apprehension, Recognition, Remembrance, the several kinds of Negation Instruments in general and Instrument of Cognition in particular, Operation in general, Perception, Non-apprehension as a means of cognition and the different Fallacies of inference. With this ends the first chapter.

The translator informs us that there are as many as 12 commentaries by different scholars on Khandana-khanda-khadyam, and it has four translations, one in English and three in Hindi. He further informs us in the Preface that this English translation was written while teaching it to the students at Rishikesh. Thirteen sections of the first chapter were completed and so the translation also has ended abruptly in the 13th section of this chapter. The idea is to give an introduction to those who are interested in the study of Khandana logic, and that is dealt with in the first thirteen sections. The next two sections deal with its application.

The author/translator himself confesses that it is difficult even to translate this book, for it requires a good knowledge of other philosophies to understand the supporting and refuting dialogues presented in it. Sometimes, even though one might understand the matter, the translator admits, it might be difficult to put those ideas into a foreign language, especially English. From this it is obvious how important it is to have the translations like this to be thoroughly edited by an English scholar before they are sent to the press.

The scheme of translation and commentary followed by the author is as follows: In each of the 14 sections translated, the passages from the original Sanskrit text are given in Devanagari script. This is followed by the translation. The translated passages have the sub-titles 'Supporting' or 'Refuting' given in bold letters. This is followed by the explanatory comments or notes by the author.

What does the title *Khandana-khanda-khadyam* mean? The author has not given its meaning explicitly, but has tried to explain it in three different ways: Easily understandable way of refuting categories of Nyaya school; Negation of *kha* or sky; and khanda-khadya being an effective Ayurvedic medicine, it means 'the effective medicine of refutation' (to establish Advaita Vedanta).

In the celebrated work on Advaita Vedanta, *Vichar Sagar*, the author Saint Nischaldas has written three chapters for three categories of students which he has named as Tattva-drishti (for one having a philosophical understanding); adrishti (for one having no understanding) and Tarka-drishti, (for one with a disputing nature). The first chapter is the shortest; the second is longer while the third chapter meant for the argumentative or disputing nature, is the longest. This book is for this third type of students. No one can understand it without a good knowledge of Nyaya philosophy and logic in general.

May we become students of the first category and escape the mind boggling argumentations.

SWAMI BRAHMESHANANDA, VARANASI

Governor of West Bengal Dr C V Ananda Bose presented the Governor's Award for Excellence to the Ramakrishna Mission at a function held in Kolkata on 24 November in recognition of the Mission's contribution to the field of social service. Swami Suviranandaji, the General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, received the award carrying a silver salver, a citation and a sum of one lakh rupees.

New Mission Centre

Ramakrishna Sevashrama in **Sitakunda**, **Bangladesh**, is now a branch of the Ramakrishna Mission, and is renamed 'Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama': 'Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Mandir Sarak (Temple Road), Chandranath Dham, Sitakunda, Chittagong 4310, Bangladesh', phone: 880-17324 20134 and email ID: <sitakunda@rkmm.org>. The Sevashrama was founded in 1992.

New Math Sub-centre

A property near the famous Tripureshwari Temple in Tripura was gifted to the Ramakrishna Math in 2014. Subsequently, **Viveknagar** (**Agartala**) centre founded a small ashrama there. The ashrama is now officially recognised as a sub-centre of Viveknagar Math centre. The address of the sub-centre is 'Ramakrishna Math, P.O. Matabari, Udaipur, Dist. Gomati, Tripura 799013'.

News of Branch Centres

❖ Swami Suhitanandaji, Vice President of the Ramakrishna Order, dedicated a new building at **Kathamrita Bhavan**, **Kolkata**, on 28 October. The programme was attended by 175 monks and 625 devotees. The building houses a prayer hall, a multipurpose hall, a few residential rooms for monks, and other facilities.

❖ Sri Chowna Mein, Deputy Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, opened the newly built girls' academic block, and Swami Suviranandaji unveiled a statue of Mother Saraswati at **Lumdung** centre on 21 November. Two ministers of Arunachal Pradesh—Sri Mama Natung, Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, and Sri Wangki Lowang, Minister for Public Health

Receiving the Governor's Award for Excellence

Public meeting at Kathamrita Bhavan

New Building at Kathamrita Bhavan, Kolkata

Engineering and Information Technology—attended the programme along with several monks, students, staff and villagers. ❖ Ms Pratima Bhoumik, Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment, and other dignitaries attended Jagaddhatri Puja at **Viveknagar** (**Agartala**) centre on 21 November. ❖ **Puri Mission** Ashrama dedicated Karmi Bhavan, a three-storied building with rooms for staff, guests and computer training, on 24 November. ❖ The newly built meeting room and stack room at **Bhubaneswar** centre were inaugurated on 25 November. ❖ Newly set-up STEM laboratories were opened at the Ramakrishna Mission schools in **Bhopal** (on 22 November), **Gwalior** (on 30 October) and **Indore** (on 18 November). (STEM—Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.)

Values Education and Youth Programmes

The following centres held programmes mentioned against their names: **Belgharia**: A youths' convention on 7 October in which 354 students from different schools and colleges took part. **Chandipur**: A two-day residential youths' convention on 25 and 26 November attended by 79 students. **Chennai Math**: Nine workshops on life skills at Vivekananda Cultural Centre in October in which altogether 429 students from 4 institutions took part. **Coimbatore Mission**: Three youths' conventions on 28 October, and 4 & 17 November which were attended by a total of 264 students from 3 schools. **Gurugram**: (i) Twenty-five workshops, including one in online mode, on values education for the teaching staff of primary and middle schools from 30 September to 21 November; in all, 822 school teachers from different parts of India participated. (ii) A social innovation programme (workshop) on 21 November in which 20 management students took part. **Koyilandy**: A youths' camp on 26 November wherein 35 college students from nearby areas participated. **Raipur**: A personality development camp at an educational institution in Raipur on 21 November attended by 225 students. **Rajamahendravaram**: Two values education programmes on 17 and 18 November which were attended by a total of 223 class-12 students. **Yadadri Bhuvanagiri**: Values education programmes at three nearby schools from 22 to 29 September in which altogether 330 students and teachers took part.

RELIEF WORK

In the wake of recent disasters, centres carried out relief operations by distributing items such as: **List of items**: rice, wheat flour, pulses, cooking oil, assorted spices, salt, biscuits, baby food, tea powder, infant milk, sugar, soya chunks, plates of food, tinned food, bread, mosquito nets, breakfast cereal sachets, cakes, cans of jam, assorted fruits, assorted vegetables, cereals, flour, gram, Horlicks, maize meal, milk powder, pasta, porridge, pulses, semolina, snacks, tamarind, flavoured milk, fruit juice, hand wash, milk, peanut butter, dhotis, saris, assorted bedding items, assorted garments, lungis, children's garments, cutlery items, toiletries, stationery kits and so on:

Cyclone Relief

Bangladesh: Following the severe Cyclone Hamoon which made landfall in Cox's Bazar area on 24 October, **Bagerhat** centre in collaboration with another institution distributed essential eatables among 80 affected

families in Cox's Bazar district on 30 October.

Disturbance Relief

Manipur: Continuing its relief operations for the victims of ethnic clashes which began in May, **Imphal** centre distributed the essential eatables as well as stationery items from 30 October to 27 November in 36 relief camps in Imphal East, Imphal West and Bishnupur districts sheltering 6,430 people from 1,826 families.

Fire Relief

Odisha: In the wake of two fire incidents in Puri district, **Puri Math** provided essential items to 7 affected families on 1 and 20 November.

Distress Relief

The following centres distributed essential items to needy people: **India: Bagda,** on 19 October; **Balaram Mandir**, Kolkata, on 14 October; **Chandipur,** from 9 October to 27 November; **Chapra,** from 11 to 16 November; **Cossipore**, Kolkata, on 10 and 12 October; **Dakshineshwar**, Kolkata, from 29 September to 30 October; **Davanagere,** from 1 August to 23 November; **Digboi,** on 30 October; **Gourhati,** from 21 September to 10 November; **Hatamuniguda,** on 21 November; **Indore,** on 4 and 19 November; **Kathamrita Bhavan**, Kolkata, from 8 to 10 October; **Krishnanagar,** from 14 October to 11 November; **Mekhliganj**, from 17 September to 14 October; **Salem**, from 19 to 22 October; **Shillong**, on 5 November; **Sinthi** (Beni Pal Udyan), Kolkata, from 1 to 31 October; **Somsar**, from 19 to 29 October; **Swamiji's Ancestral House**, Kolkata, from 26 to 30 August. **Bangladesh: Bagerhat,** on 18 November; **Chittagong**, in October; **Dhaka,** from 18 to 20 October; **Faridpur**, from 20 to 24 October; **South Africa**: (a) **Durban,** in November; **Phoenix,** in November.

Winter Relief

The following centres distributed blankets and winter garments to needy people: **Cossipore**, Kolkata, from 1 to 15 November; **Indore**, on 4 and 19 November; **Mekhliganj**, from 14 October to 29 November; **Narainpur**, on 16 November; **Rajamahendravaram,** on 21 November; **Srinagar** on 22 and 26 November; **Swamiji's Ancestral House**, Kolkata, from 26 August to 13 September; **Thanjavur**, on 26 November.

Infrastructural Support: Madhya Pradesh: Indore centre gave 30 ceramic green boards to 10 schools in Khargone district on 4 November.

Distribution of Sarees: Kamarpukur

Winter Relief: Puri Mission

The Vedanta Kesari, May 1914

The Vedanta Kesari

One hundred and eleven years and going strong....

His famous address at The World's Parliament of Religions, Chicago in 1893 had catapulted Swami Vivekananda to the status of a super star. But Swamiji was not one to bask in chaffy glory. He wrote in a letter dated 12 Jan 1895, 'I want to preach my ideas for the good of the world. ... What work have you done in the way of advancing the ideas and organising in India? ... My life is more precious than spending it in getting the admiration of the world. I have no time for such foolery.'

Swamiji loved and revered his motherland as his own mother. Every breath of his aspired for her well-being and every cell in his body yearned that she regains her lost glory. Swamiji's panacea for this lay in India's very own practical and ennobling Vedantic wisdom. Vedanta recognises no weakness. It proclaims that in every individual lies a mine of strength. All that is needed is an effort to draw from it.

For the propagation of the powerful message of Vedanta, Swamiji opted for the print medium and decided to bring out a journal, giving it the name *Brahmavadin*. In February 1895, in a letter to his trusted disciple Alasinga Perumal, he wrote: *'Now I am bent upon starting the journal. Herewith I send a hundred dollars ... Hope this will go just a little in starting your paper.'*

Brahmavadin became selfless and devoted Alasinga's calling and the first issue rolled out from a press in Broadway, Chennai on 14 September 1895. The birth of the magazine was certainly an occasion for celebration but the struggles were far from over. But Alasinga braved on, surmounting many an impediment. Sadly, Swamiji passed away in 1902, at the age of thirty-nine. Alasinga's intense anguish morphed into heightened devotion towards the magazine. But the next hurdle came in 1909, in the form of Alasinga's own demise. In May 1914, the magazine, tottering as it was, floundered and grounded to a halt.

It was at this crucial juncture, that the Ramakrishna Mission stepped in to revive it. Had not our beloved Swamiji said, '*The Brahmavadin is a jewel – it must not perish!*' And so, the very next month when *Brahmavadin* closed down, it was resuscitated with the new name *The Vedanta Kesari.*

The history of *The Vedanta Kesari* is much more than just a tale of sweat, toil, and a dream realised. It is the roaring *Lion of Vedanta* that forces the foxes of human weaknesses to run to their holes.

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VK General Donation

Please contribute ₹ **500/-** and above to meet the running costs of the magazine.

Page Donor: Please sponsor *one or more pages* of the magazine in your name or that of your dear ones. Sponsorship for one page in one issue: ₹ **1000/-**

VK Permanent Fund

To establish the magazine on firm financial footing, please contribute ₹ **5,000/-** and above to the Permanent Fund.

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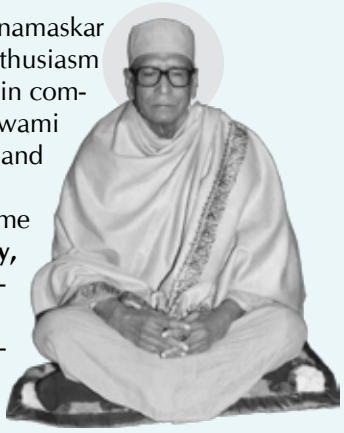
Swami Gambhirananda Birth Quasquicentennial Committee

15/6/3, Lakshmi Narayan Chakraborty Lane, Kadamtala, Howrah – 711 101
Mobile/ WhatsApp: 9477082366, 9831031544, 7003607784. Email: shuvom.hrm@gmail.com

AN APPEAL

Dear Devotees,

Swami Gambhirananda Birth Quasquicentennial Committee extends namaskar and good wishes to all of you. We announce with great reverence and enthusiasm that the Committee offers its heartiest invitation to you all for the celebration in commemoration of the 125th Birth Anniversary of the Most Revered Srimat Swami Gambhiranandaji Maharaj, the 11th President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.



To mark this auspicious occasion, we are organising a Memorial Programme at **The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture Golpark in Kolkata on Sunday, 4th February 2024** to pay homage and commemorate the invaluable contributions and teachings of Most Revered Maharaj.

We are also delighted to announce the release of two separate Commemorative Volumes in English and Bengali languages. These volumes encapsulate the profound literary works, lectures, interviews, letters, and spiritual messages of the Most Revered Maharaj.

However, the successful execution of these publications and the Memorial Programme requires substantial financial support. We estimate a need of approximately **Rupees Twenty Lakhs (Rs.20 lakhs)** for this purpose at the first phase. Your generous contributions will facilitate the fulfillment of the above mentioned purposes in a befitting manner with reverence towards Most Revered Maharaj.

We humbly appeal to all devotees, followers, and disciples of Most Revered Maharaj, and to all sections of the society, to participate generously in this noble cause. Your active contribution will play a pivotal role in making this celebration a grand success.

All donations (cash/ cheque) should be made in favor of
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Revered Srimat Swami Gautamananda Ji Maharaj, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, has kindly agreed to release the commemorative volume and deliver his benedictory address. Revered Swami Suvirananda Ji Maharaj, the General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, has graciously agreed to address on the auspicious occasion as Chief Guest. Many other distinguished Monks of the order will grace the occasion and share their reminiscences on Revered Srimat Swami Gambhirananda Ji Maharaj.

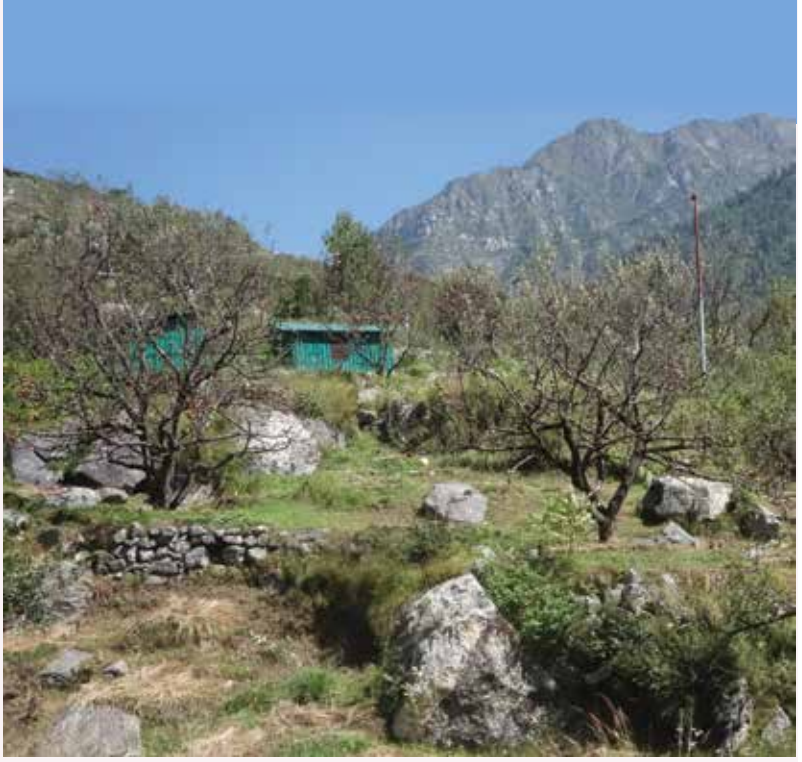
Thanking you,

Dr. Gour Das
President

Dr. Shuvendu Majumder
Secretary

*The surplus amount after all expenditures will be offered for welfare purpose to the centres of Ramakrishna Mission where the memories of 11th President Maharaj are associated.

AN APPEAL



RAMAKRISHNA MATH

Ganganagar, P.O. Uttarkashi
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Dear Devotees and Friends,

Please accept our loving Namaskaras and best wishes.

In the innermost sanctuary of the Himalayas there is a centre of the Ramakrishna Order at the holy town of Uttarkashi in Uttarakhand. The Ashrama was started in 1963, during the birth centenary of Swami Vivekananda, for the *sadhus* of the Order, who wish to perform intense *Tapasya* in the *Tapobhumi* Himalayas. Over the years, hundreds of *sadhus* performed austerities here for spiritual upliftment. Monks and *brahmacharins* of the Order continue to visit here in large numbers for *Tapasya* and pilgrimage to Kedar-Badri-Gangotri-Yamnotri as well.

In view of expanding the popular Retreat Centre, we have recently acquired a parcel of land measuring 1.5 acres at village Sukhi near Harshil valley on the Rishikesh-Gangotri National Highway.

We have drawn a master plan to make the place a spiritual hub for the monks and devotees. Two separate residential quarters, one each for monks and devotees, and a common meditation hall are proposed to be built in phases.

It is decided to construct **a Sadhan Kutir for monks** at present for which a building plan is approved by the Headquarters at Belur Math, with an **estimated cost of Rs.56 Lakhs only.** We earnestly request you to come forward with your liberal offerings to materialize the project at the earliest.

Donations can be made by NEFT/RTGS to the ***Ramakrishna Math, Union Bank of India, Uttarkashi Branch; IFSC: UBIN0560189, A/c No. 601802010006696***. Kindly mention the purpose- ***"Donation for Land & Building Fund,"*** the **PAN** and **Full Address** of the donor by email to ***uttarkashi@rkmm.org*** *or SMS /WhatsApp to* ***8630487274.***

Donations towards our Math is exempt from IT under 80G Act.

May Sri Ramakrishna, Ma Sarada, Swami Vivekananda bless you all.

Yours in the Lord,
Swami Amaleshananda
Adhyaksha

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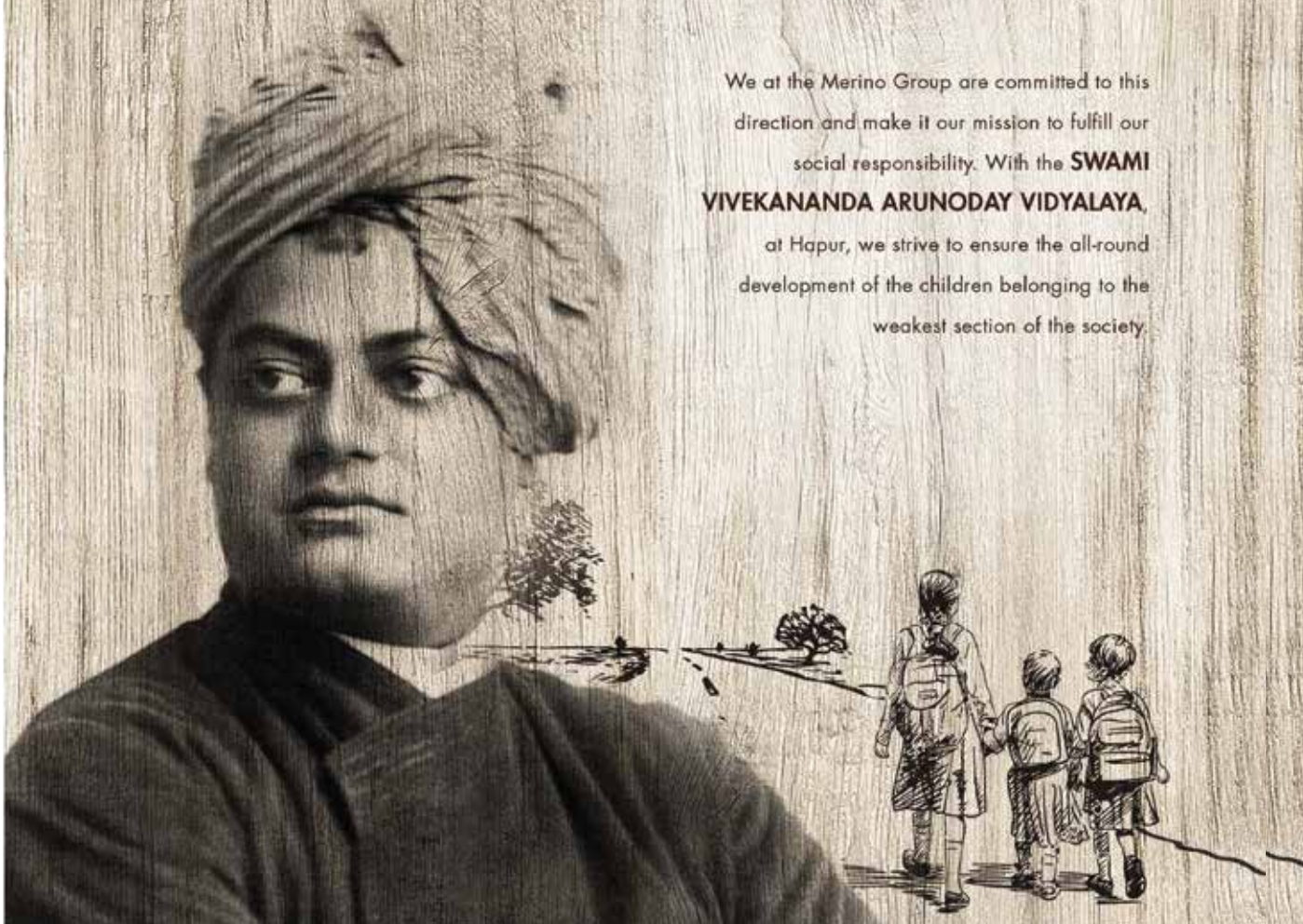

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