

REACH

NEWSLETTER OF VEDANTA CENTRES OF AUSTRALIA

This is a special issue commemorating the Inauguration of the centre of Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Victoria at 7 Judy Court, Vermont, Melbourne on the 20th March 2004.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It is more than 3 years ago in the year 2000, in the month of October, the Ramakrishna organization with its head quarters in Belur Math, Howrah, West Bengal, India decided to start centres in Australia and New Zealand. As a first step, On 22nd October 2000 the **Vedanta Centre of Sydney** was officially affiliated to the Ramakrishna Organization.

Further, the Melbourne group functioning as '**Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Victoria**' has decided to adopt a common constitution as that of the Vedanta Centre of Sydney and has requested for the status of a sub-Centre of the Sydney Centre – which has been conferred upon them. This paves way for the Melbourne activities to be part of the official Ramakrishna Movement. We find during the last two



Sri Ramakrishna Temple at Belur Math (originally planned by Swami Vivekananda)

and a half years quite substantial activities have taken place in Melbourne and you all deserve to be warmly thanked.

With the procurement of this Centre here at 7, Judy court, Vermont, a new phase of activities begins for the Melbourne group of devotees and friends. This Centre will henceforth be the common meeting place for many of the activities. It is necessary that all the friends, who are deeply interested in the propagation of the teachings of the Vedanta philosophy, as epitomized by the life of Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother Sri Sarada devi and preached all over the world by the illustrious patriot prophet of India Swami Vivekananda, join hands together to make all efforts a great success.

On the occasion of the inauguration of the Melbourne Centre on the 20th March 2004, it is a pleasure to know a Newsletter REACH, will start its publication. REACH will be a source of information and knowledge, with articles on Vedanta and also serve as a channel of communication. Please participate in the success of REACH. It is also important that each and every one of you helps and supports the Centre in all its activities so that individually and collectively all make spiritual progress.

May the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda be showered on you in abundance.

Yours ever in the service of Sri Ramakrishna,

Swami Sridharananda, Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Victoria

DIVINE DIGEST

FORBEARANCE: *The man who retaliates finds immediate pleasure. The man who forbears finds lasting pleasure. A holy man seated on the brink of the Ganges at Hrishikesh noticed a scorpion floating down. He held out a hand and saved it. The creature stung him. A violent jerk made by him threw it into the river. He saved it for the second time. It stung him again. This time he threw it on land. This is forbearance.*

Forbearance is characteristic of a saint. He does not return evil for evil. (Tiruvalluvar)

THE SOARING HEIGHT: *When we soar right up in the air the ups and downs in the earth disappear. Instead a vast expanse is perceived. Such is also the case when we soar mentally. All pettiness dissolves to the one who soars intellectually. All barriers of social customs and usages disappear from him who soars in universalism. Bigotry and fanaticism are overcome by him. Nationalism and castism are cast aside by the one who soars in humanism.*

Multiplicity vanishes in the sublime height of the knowledge of Brahman.(Vedanta)

Source: Daily Divine Digest by Swami Chidbhanananda: Sri Ramakrishna Tapovan

The Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Victoria

A local Perspective

Historical Overview: Development of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Victoria (Australia).

The following snapshot of events that encapsulates the history of the Vedanta Movement in Melbourne is based on an article written by Mr Tapesh Gangopadhyay.

- **1974:** The Vedanta movement started with the first Melbourne visit of Srimat Swami Rudranandaji and Srimat Swami Damodaranandaji from Fiji.
- **1980:** On 19th April 1980, Srimat Swami Damodaranandaji from Fiji visited Melbourne and held discourses. Swamiji made plans to visit Melbourne at a regular interval.
- **1980:** First visit to Melbourne by Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj: On 19th August, 1980, Swamiji gave a public lecture on “Relevance of the Spiritual life”.
- **1982:** On 20th May 1982, Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji, the then Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission visited Melbourne. He was accompanied by Srimat Swami Siddharthanandaji and Srimat Swami Damodaranandaji. An Initial Ceremony (Mantra Diksha) was organised.
- **1982:** Second visit of Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji in June 1982. Swamiji stayed in Melbourne for 4 days and met various devotees and gave directions for the Movement activities.
- **1983, 1984 and 1985:** Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji visited Melbourne regularly till 1985 as part of his annual world tour.
- **1983:** Pravrajika Ajayaprana Mataji, newly appointed President of the Ramakrishna Sarada Vedanta Society of NSW visited Melbourne during the month of April.
- **1986:** Swami Bhuteshanandaji visited Melbourne for the second time. He was accompanied by Swami Nityamuktanandaji and Swami Damodaranandaji. During this period, Initiation ceremony, Vedanta Retreat and Satsanga were held.
- **1986:** The Vedanta Society was formally established with the formation of its first managing committee.
- **1988:** Swami Damodaranandaji Visited Melbourne on the 22nd of September and a Vedanta Retreat was organized.
- **1988:** Swami Siveswaranandaji from the Singapore Ashram visited Melbourne during 8th to 9th November (Deepavali period).
- **1989:** Swami Damodaranandaji visited Melbourne and stayed for 6 days. During this period, various Satsangs, and a Vedanta Retreat were organized.
- **1990:** Swami Damodaranandaji visited Melbourne and stayed for 5 days. During this period, various Satsangs, and a Vedanta Retreat were organized.
- **1991:** The Vedanta Society becomes a registered body.
- **1991:** Swami Parasaranandaji from Singapore Ashram visited Melbourne. In September Swami Damodaranandaji also visited Melbourne.
- **1992:** Srimat Swami Gahananadaji Maharaj, the then Vice President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission visited Melbourne. He was accompanied by Brahmachari Sruti Chaitanaya and Swami Damodaranandaji. Public lectures, Initiation ceremony and Satsangs were held during this Occasion.
- **1993:** During June, Srimat Swami Sridharanandaji and Srimat Swami Damodaranandaji visited Melbourne.
- **1993:** The Centenary celebration of Swami Vivekananda’s Chicago address was celebrated in Melbourne.
- **1993:** Swami Damodaranandaji visited Melbourne again during September and a Vedanta retreat was organized.
- **1995:** Srimat Swami Jitatanandaji from the Rajkot Ashram, India visited Melbourne. He was accompanied by Swami Damodaranandaji. Various public lectures were held.
- **1996:** Swami Damodaranandaji visited Melbourne in August and initiation Ceremony was arranged.
- **1997:** During September, Srimat Swami Sridharanandaji and Srimat Swami Damodaranandaji visited Melbourne. This year was celebrated as the Centenary of Swami Vivekananda’s return to India. A one day retreat and many public lectures were held.
- **1998:** During May, Swami Muktirupanandaji from the Fiji Centre visited Melbourne. Many talks were organized during this month.
- **1999:** During March, Swami Jagadatmanandaji from Singapore Ashram visited Melbourne. Many talks were organized during this month.
- **1999:** During July, Srimat Swami Smarananandaji, the General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission visited Melbourne.
- **1999:** In September, Swami Bhaktirupanandaji from the Fiji Ashram visited Melbourne.
- **2000:** Swami Damodaranandaji visited Melbourne in July.
- **2000:** The Official center of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission was established in Sydney as the Vedanta Center of Sydney. Srimat Swami Sridharanandaji took charge of the Center.
- **2001:** Swami Sridharanandaji came to Melbourne on the 10th April and held a 4 day discourse on the Bhagavad Gita -Chapter 12.
- **2001 onwards:** Monthly lectures by Swamiji organized in Melbourne.
- **2001:** During May, Swami Damodaranandaji visited Melbourne. Initiation ceremony and parlour talks were held.
- **2002:** Swami Atmeshanandaji, vice president of the Vedanta Center of Sydney visited Melbourne and conducted a youth program.
- **2002:** Swami Bhaktirupanandaji from Fiji visited Melbourne.
- **2002:** Swami Damodaranandaji visited Melbourne as part of his Australian tour.
- **2003:** On the 16th March, The Birthday of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated as a public function.
- **2003:** on the 6th July, during the AGM Swami Sridharanandaji was invited to take the responsibility of the presidentship of the Melbourne Society and he has kindly acceded to the invitation.
- **2003:** A special AGM was held to adopt the Sydney Constitution and to establish its status of the Society as a sub-center of the Sydney Center.
- **2003:** The Melbourne Sub-Center had purchased a property at 7, Judy Court, Vermont, Victoria -3133 and had taken possession on the 6th December 2003.
- **2004:** The formal inauguration of the Melbourne sub-center.

Activities and Programmes of the Society.

The Society has immersed itself in a host of inspiring activities and programmes that has provided valuable occasions in fostering spiritual growth and harmony amidst holy company. The following encompass some of the activities in the last few years.

❖ **Public Lectures in Melbourne:**

These have been presented by Pujyapada Srimat Swami Sridharanandaji, President of the Vedanta Centre of Sydney, the official Centre of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission in Australia. The ongoing monthly discourses, begun in June 2001, are based on the Mundaka Upanishad and Bhagavad Gita as well as special discourses on the life and teachings of the Holy Trinity. All lectures continue to be well attended by a large number of spiritual seekers. The Society hopes to continue to organise these monthly lectures with active support from members, fellow devotees and well-wishers.



The Melbourne Sub-Center - 7, Judy Court, Vermont, Victoria -3133

❖ **Srimat Swami**

Damodaranandaji's visit to Melbourne: Revered Swamiji Maharaj, a senior monk of The Ramakrishna Math and Mission, visited devotees in Melbourne twice as part of his Australia visit. Swamiji has earlier settled down at the Mission Headquarters, Belur Math, Howrah, West - Bengal, India and made this special trip at the special appeal of all devotees in Australia. His first visit to Melbourne was from 16th October 2002 to 6th November 2002 and he again visited from 10th March to 16th April on his return trip to India. During his stay, Swamiji conducted sathsanga everyday and gave special talks on Bhakthi and other related subjects. All devotees were deeply inspired in the holy presence and company of Swamiji.

❖ **Srimat Swami Bhaktirupanandaji, Head of the Ramakrishna Mission,** Fiji visited Melbourne as part of his Australian tour. Swamiji was in Melbourne from 25th August to 28th August 2002 and a special sathsanga was organised on the 25th August 2002.

❖ **The public function to celebrate the Birthday of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa** was held at the Oakleigh Hall on the 16th March 2003. It was the first time that a large public function had been organised by the Society in Melbourne. More than 350 devotees participated. The entire programme was superbly coordinated and was enhanced by the effective use of modern technologies. A significant feature of this auspicious function and indeed a historical moment to savour, was the holy presence of three Senior Monks of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission – Srimat Swami Damodaranandaji, Srimat Swami Sridharanandaji and Srimat Swami Atmeshanandaji. Some programme highlights included an audio-visual presentation on the Life of Sri Ramakrishna; rendering of devotional songs; an inspirational performance by the youth depicting the Life and Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. Dr Greg Bailey from Latrobe University was the guest speaker. The main talk on “Sri Ramakrishna: The Spiritual Incarnation of our present age” was presented by Srimat Swami Sridharanandaji.

❖ During the year **four special Birthday Celebrations** were held on Sri Sri Ma Sarada Devi, Holy Mother; Sri Sri Swamiji, Swami Vivekananda; Sri Sri Ramakrishna Deva and Sri Sri Ramachandra Ji. It was a rare blessing to have the holy presence of Swami Damodaranandaji Maharaj at the Ramanavami function.

❖ **Monthly prayer meetings** that were hosted by devotees in their respective homes for the duration of 2003.

“We welcome all interested in the Ramakrishna Movement to join the Society as members and render all support/ help in all our activities. Application forms can be obtained from the Secretary of the Society. Please see the last page for contact details.”

The Holy Trinity Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Mother Sarada, Swami Vivekananda are revered as being the spiritual fountain-head of the Ramakrishna Mission and Ramakrishna Math, Howrah, West Bengal India. In this spirit of paying special homage to the Holy Trinity, salient features of their inspiring lives and teachings, derived from authentic sources, would be given due emphasis.

Sri Ramakrishna

A short account of his life and teachings

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



On 18 February 1836, was born in India a man of God, who has come to be known as Sri Ramakrishna—a name that spontaneously evokes in the minds of millions of Hindus heart-full adoration and love. Above the din and confusion of modern life we hear the clarion call of Sri Ramakrishna directing our attention to the deeper verities of existence.

The life of Sri Ramakrishna, though devoid of spectacular events, is filled with spiritual romance of the rarest-type. The 51 years of his mortal existence give us vivid stories of religion in practice. During these years he constantly lived on the exalted plane of God-Consciousness. The natural tendency of his mind was to soar above the phenomena of the world. He brought down his mind with utmost difficulty to the ordinary level in order to talk with men and women.

Sri Ramakrishna was born of poor parents living in Kamarpukur, a wayside village of Bengal. His father, Khudiram

Chattopadhyaya was full of piety and never deviated from the path of truth. His mother, Chandra Devi was full of womanly grace and kindness. Sri Ramakrishna showed, during his childhood, a precocious understanding of the deeper mysteries of the spiritual realm. He manifested supreme indifference to the education imparted in the school. He used to say that books are fetters that impede the free expression of the soul. He instead took special delight in studying and hearing about great heroes and heroines of the Hindu religious epics. The simple village had an extensive mango grove where he would repair with his schoolmates and enact dramas selecting episodes from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The boy, with his clear skin, beautiful flowing locks, charming voice and independent spirit, would always play the leading part.

At the age of seven Sri Ramakrishna lost his father and his serious nature, though hidden under the thin film of boyish merriment, perhaps got a glimpse of the transitoriness of human life.

His first spiritual ecstasy was the outcome of his innate artistic nature. Observing the flight of a flock of cranes with their snow-white wings shining against the background

of the sky covered with dark rain-clouds, he lost physical consciousness and said afterwards that he had felt, in that state, an ineffable peace.

At 17 Sri Ramakrishna came to Calcutta where his brother conducted a Sanskrit School. About continuing his studies Sri Ramakrishna said at that time, “ Brother, what shall I do with a mere bread-winning education?

I shall rather acquire that wisdom which will illumine my heart and get which one is satisfied forever.”

The life of Sri Ramakrishna took a new turn when he was engaged as a priest in a temple where the Deity is worshipped as the Divine Mother of the Universe under the name of Kali. He conceived of God as our Eternal Mother who is ever ready to grant us the priceless boon of divine wisdom if we only turn our gaze from the shadowy objects of this world. His soul was not to be satisfied with a mere mechanical observance of religion. He craved for the vision of God. Soon, before the onrush of his fervour, formalities of religion were swept away. Henceforth his worship consisted of passionate cry and prayer of a child pained at the separation from his beloved mother. He would weep and pray, “ O Mother! Where art thou? Reveal thyself to me. Am I a wretch that Thou dost not come to me? Pleasure, wealth, friends, enjoyment-I do not want any of these. I only desire to see Thee, Mother.” He spent day and nights in such agonising prayer. Words of a worldly nature would singe

his ears. Often people would be amazed to see him rolling on the ground and rubbing his face against the sand with the piteous wail, “ Another day is spent in vain, Mother, for I have not seen Thee.”

In another mood he would sit before the Deity and say, “ Art Thou true, Mother or is it all a fiction of the mind? Is religion then a fantasy?” Thoughts, like these, would only increase his longing for God. As a consequence he was blessed with the realisation of God.

Regarding this god-vision he said, later on, to Swami Vivekananda, “ Yes, my child I have seen God, only more intensely than I see you. I have talked to God and more intensely than I am talking to you.” Sri Ramakrishna used to emphasise that if one shows the same attachment to God as the miser feels for his hoarded treasure, the devoted wife for her beloved husband and the helpless child for its affectionate mother, God is sure to reveal Himself to such a fervent soul in three days.

A tremendous statement for our modern times! Yes, he has seen God, as the indwelling presence in all, in whom all human and moral relationships reach their culmination. His vision of God was the irresistible content of his inner experience. This gave an impression that God is not, after all, an unrealisable object living behind the clouds, but our nearest and dearest possession, in whom we live, move and have our being. There is truly such a thing as god-realisation in this life.

Sri Ramakrishna was a great scientist in the realm of spirituality. Purity became the very breath of his life. Nothing could persuade him to deviate from the truth in thought, word or deed. To learn humility he would go to the house

of a pariah and clean the dirty places with his long hair. He knew that the two greatest impediments of spiritual life were lust and gold. He looked upon all women as the manifestation of the Blessed Mother of the universe and his body would writhe in pain if he touched a coin, even in sleep. As a result of deep discrimination he could not see any difference between gold and clay, and found them both equally worthless for the realisation of Truth. While practising spiritual disciplines he forgot food and drink as necessities of life, and sleep he left out altogether. He had only one burning passion, the vision of God. With such a mind he practised different rituals and ceremonies as laid down by Hinduism for spiritual unfoldment.

The friend and relatives of Sri Ramakrishna thought that marriage would cure this lunacy. Sri Ramakrishna gave his willing consent, seeing in it also the hand of Providence. When later on, the wife, a pure maiden of 16, came to her husband at Dakshineswar where Sri Ramakrishna practised his austerities, he knelt before her and said: “The Divine Mother has shown me that every woman is Her manifestation. Therefore I look upon all women as the image of the Divine Mother. I also think of you as such. But I am at your disposal. If you like you can drag me down to the worldly plane.”

In a twinkling of an eye, she understood the state of her husband's mind and said with humility that she had no desire to drag him down from the spiritual heights; all that she wanted was the privilege of living near him and his attendant and disciple. Henceforth the two souls lived together in the temple-garden as the sharers of many divine visions.

The Significance of Sri Ramakrishna

Having attained the goal of human birth, namely the realisation of Truth, Sri Ramakrishna became eager to share with all his vision of joy and peace.

This inspired prophet of the nineteenth century did not enter into a cave or lead the life of a recluse, to enjoy, for himself, the bliss of meditation. He realised that he had become an instrument in the hand of God to help his fellow human beings. Drawn by the aroma of his transfigured existence, people began to flock to him from far and wide and felt themselves spiritually uplifted according to their inner evolution. Yet Sri Ramakrishna was no preacher of the ordinary type. He used to say that the bees come of their own accord in search of honey when the flower is in full bloom. For a quarter of a century this man of God preached his gospel of God-life. His whole personality was transfigured with love and compassion.

As a result of his constant teachings, he felt a viatrin to cancer of the throat. Even when it became impossible for him to swallow liquid food, he could not send away any eager enquirer without some words of solace. One day, during this period, a Yogi remarked that he could easily cure himself through his yogic powers, by concentrating on the throat. Sri Ramakrishna said, "How can my mind, which has been given to God, be directed again to this cage of flesh and blood?" Swami Vivekananda begged him to pray to God for the cure of his ailment. But Sri Ramakrishna said, "she showed you all to me and said, 'why, are you not eating through all these mouths?'"

This is a demonstration of how the

realisation of God frees the soul from the limitations of the body.

At last on the 16 August 1886, Sri Ramakrishna uttering the sacred name of his beloved God, entered into a state of spiritual ecstasy from which his mind never came back to the mortal plane of existence.

Thus there lived, in our age, a man who saw god face to face. Having realised the fountain of Divine Love, he radiated love for all without any national or geographical limits. Every particle of his being was filled with God-consciousness. Though living in this world, he seemed to be a man of the other world. The man in him was completely transformed into god. Of such the Vedas declare, "He who realises Truth becomes one with Truth. By the vision of the Divine, man himself becomes Divine."

The life and teachings of this God-man have a tremendous significance for the people of modern times. Sri Ramakrishna demonstrated that:

- ❖ Ideal spiritual life is always possible and that it is not the monopoly of any particular age.
- ❖ Disciplines laid down by religion can be practised even today if we have the required earnestness; and the vision of Truth, revealed to man in olden times, cannot be denied to us if we are eager for it.
- ❖ God is not the monopoly of any religion or creed, but the common property of all; He is the loving Father of mankind. He permeates the entire universe as intelligence and consciousness.
- ❖ He is present everywhere, from

the blade of grass to Brahma as the inmost essence of all. The same infinite expanse of water forms the basis of the froth, bubbles and waves.

- ❖ The difference between man and man, and between other animate and inanimate objects, lies in the degree of divine manifestation.
 - ❖ When God is involved, he is the grain of sand, and when he is fully evolved, He is Jesus Christ.
 - ❖ Religion does not consist of dogmas and creeds. It is being and becoming.
 - ❖ Everything in the world has been polluted like food thrown from the mouth; but God alone is unpolluted as no human tongue has been able to describe fully what He is. His nature can be known only in the silent depth of our hearts.
 - ❖ The four cardinal points of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings are the Oneness of Existence, Divinity of Man, Unity of God and the Harmony of Religions.
 - ❖ Sri Ramakrishna used to say, "Do whatever you please, with the knowledge of God in your pocket."
 - ❖ Mind uninspired by Divine Wisdom is like milk that gets easily mixed up with the water of the world. But if by churning, one transforms milk into butter. In the same way we are to purify the mind by divine knowledge; and then if it dwells in the world it will not be polluted by worldliness.
- Everything is sacred. There is no difference between the temple and the farm-yard. The cloister and the laboratory, the temple and the studio, the cell and the market-place are equally fit places to worship.

Mother Sarada: A short account of her life and spiritual teachings

The Lord has promised in the Gita that He will assume a human body through His Maya and manifest himself in the world whenever religion declines, and will help men to attain peace. Will not the need of the age rouse His compassion? Will not man's helplessness and despair urge God to assume a body? The demand of the times has actually brought this about; for the Lord has, in truth, once again been born as the spiritual teacher of the world. Listen with faith to His gracious message: 'As many faiths, so many paths' and 'You will realise the Lord through any spiritual practice performed with a sincere heart.' Let us dwell in admiration on the unheard-of renunciation practised Him in order to bring back that transcendent awareness of the Supreme Spirit into the mind of man.

Her own mother Shyamasundari Devi once lamented: "My Sarada has been married to an ascetic. She will never know the happiness of being addressed as 'Mother.' The Master, who happened to hear it, remarked: "Your daughter will have so many children that she will be tired of being addressed day and night as 'Mother.'" And countless indeed were her spiritual 'sons' and 'daughters.' She was the Sahadharmini, a companion in life, not of an ordinary man, but of the Incarnation of the age, who came to generate Bhakti and Jnana among men, and whose main teaching inculcated renunciation of lust and possessions. In conformity with his ideal, which was hers too, the children born of her were not physical but spiritual, and of these she had a countless number.



Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother was the Divine Consort and first disciple of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna and thus an integral part of his spiritual self and of the saving message he delivered unto mankind. Unlike the spiritual counterparts of the past incarnations like Rama, Krishna and Buddha and some others, Sri Sarada Devi was born in a poor but cultured Brahmin family of Bengal in the village of Jayrambati. Born on 22 December 1853, as the eldest daughter of Ramachandra Mukerjee and Shyamasundari Devi, her early girlhood was spent in various domestic chores. She entered into

Sri Ramakrishna's life as his partner in it when she was only five years old. After the marriage, Sarada had occasion, when she was seven and again at thirteen and fourteen, to meet Gadadhar and to be with him for a few days each time. A really meaningful meeting took place only later when she went to Dakshineswar to meet him. Trudging most of the sixty miles to Calcutta, she arrived unannounced to Dakshineswar one night in March 1872, stricken with fever on the way. From now onwards, with breaks of short intervals for visits to her mother at Jayrambati, Sri Sarada Devi was by the side of Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar and later at Cossipore till 1886 when death separated them in a physical sense. It was a period of training and discipleship, during which the Mother in her became more and more manifest, making her ready to take up the leadership of the spiritual movement that the Master inaugurated. She became the first and foremost of his disciples. This transformation was effected through her service of the Master and the practice of devotional disciplines he prescribed for her. The type of personality into which she was shaped through that training was one characterised by inexhaustible patience and peace, extreme simplicity combined with dignity, a non-turbulent but compelling spiritual fervour, a

loving temperament that knew no distinction between friend and foe, and a maternal attitude of a spontaneous type towards all that charmed and brought under her influence everyone who came near her.

By careful education the Master helped to make her a true Sahadharmini, a fellow-seeker in the quest for the higher values of life. It was because of this mutually complementary nature of their characters, that they have become perfect ideals of both the married state and the monastic values. A memorable moment in the life of this holy couple was the Shodasi Puja, in which the Master offered actual ceremonial worship to the Holy Mother, seating her on the pedestal of the Deity. Then he resigned himself completely to the Divine Mother and offered to the Deity manifest before him, the fruits of his austerities, his rosary, himself and everything that was his. Thus for Sri Ramakrishna it signified the final triumph of the spirit over the body and the recognition of Divinity in all. For Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother,

too, it had a deep significance. She was elevated in truth and in reality from Sarada, the daughter of Ramachandra, to Sarada, the Holy Mother, the manifestation of the Eternal Mother of the Universe, for all humanity to worship. She became a full sharer in the spiritual glory of the Master.

Sri Sarada Devi Some Spiritual Teachings

- ❖ Is faith so cheap, my child? Faith is the last word. If one has faith, the goal is practically reached.
- ❖ God is one's very own. It is the eternal relationship. He is everyone's own. One realises Him in proportion to the intensity of one's feelings for Him.
- ❖ The happiness of the world is transitory. The less you become attached to the world, the more you enjoy peace of mind.
- ❖ Whenever the mind goes after anything other than God, consider that as transient and surrender the mind at the sacred feet of the Lord.

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

❖ If you can follow one of Master's teachings, you get everything.

❖ I am the mother of the wicked, as I am the mother of the virtuous. Never fear. Whenever you are in distress, just say to yourself, "I have a mother."

Further Spiritual gems

On Sri Ramakrishna

I was then suffering from excruciating pain because I had not been blessed with a vision of the Mother. I felt as if my heart were being squeezed by a wet towel. I was overpowered by a great restlessness and a fear that it may not be possible to realise Her in this life. I could not bear the separation any longer: life did not seem worth living. Suddenly my eyes fell on the sword that was kept in the Mother's temple. Determined to put an end to my life, I jumped like a mad man and seized it, when suddenly they Blessed Mother revealed Herself to me and I fell unconscious to the floor. What happened after that externally, or how that day or the next day passed, I do not know, but within me there was a steady flow of undiluted bliss altogether new, and I felt the presence of the Divine Mother.

(Sri Ramakrishna)

From Sri Ramakrishna: A Biography In Pictures (Advaita Ashram).



Holy Mother Sarada Devi Temple at Belur Math

Swami Vivekananda: A brief account of his life and spiritual teachings

Keep a picture of the Master before you and know for certain that he is always with you. Open your grief-stricken heart to him. Shed tears and sincerely pray, "O Lord. Draw me towards you, give me peace of mind." By doing so constantly you will gradually attain peace of mind. Have devotion for the Master, and whenever you are in distress speak it out to him.

"Now and then, at long intervals of time, a being find his way to this planet who is unquestionably a wanderer from another sphere, the power, the radiance of the far distant region from which he came.

He walks among men but he is not at home here.

*He is a pilgrim, a stranger,
he tarries but a night."*



Indeed, the personality of Swami Vivekananda was one such. He was a spiritual genius of the sharpest intellect and a vedantist through and through. In his short life of 39 years Swamiji sent a current of spirituality with his sharp and relentless logic across the globe.

Few of this generation can claim the honour of personally knowing this great soul. But through his voluminous talks and writings which have been compiled as the *Complete Works for Swami Vivekananda* we receive an idea of the greatness and spiritual depth of the Saint. Romain Rolland writes "His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel Choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years' distance,

without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks, what transports must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the lips of the hero!"

The following is an extract from his talk "THE SECRET OF WORK". Swamiji reveals how "unattached" work can free the man from the miseries of this world.

We read in the Bhagavad-Gita again and again that we must all work incessantly. All work is by nature composed of good and evil. We cannot do any work which will not do some good somewhere; there cannot be any work which will not cause some harm somewhere.

Every work must necessarily be a mixture of good and evil; yet we are commanded to work

incessantly. Good and evil will both have their results, will produce their Karma. Good action will entail upon us good effect; bad action, bad. But good and bad are both bondages of the soul. The solution reached in the Gita, in regard to this bondage-producing nature of work is, that if we do not attach ourselves to the work we do, it will not have any binding effect on our soul. We shall try to understand what is meant by this "non-attachment" to work.

As the tortoise tucks its feet and head inside the shell and you may kill it and break it in pieces, and yet it will not come out, even so the character of that man who has control over his motives and organs is unchangeably established. He controls his own inner forces, and nothing can draw them out against his will. By this continuous reflex of good thoughts,

good impressions moving over the surface of the mind, the tendency for doing good becomes strong and as the result we feel able to control the *Indriyas* (the sense-organs, the nerve-centres). Thus alone will character be established, then alone a man gets to truth. Such a man is safe for ever; he cannot do any evil. You may place him in any company, there will be no danger for him. There is a still higher state than having this good tendency, and that is the desire for liberation. You must remember that freedom of the soul is the goal of all yogas, and each one equally leads to the same result. By work alone men may get to where Buddha got largely by meditation or Christ by prayer. Buddha was a working *Jnani*, Christ was *Bhakta*, but the same goal was reached by both of them. The difficulty of here. Liberation means entire freedom – freedom from the bondage of good, as well as from the bondage of evil. A golden chain is as much a chain as an iron one. There is a thorn in my finger, and I use another to take the first one out; and when I have taken it out, I throw both of them aside; I have no necessity for keeping the second thorn, because both are thorns after all. So the bad tendencies are counteracted by the good ones, and the bad impressions on the mind should be removed by the fresh waves of good ones, until all that is evil almost disappears, or is subdued and held in control in a corner of the mind; but after that the good tendencies have also to be conquered. Thus the “attached” became the “unattached”. Work, but let not the action of the thought produce a deep impression on the mind. Let the ripples come and go, let huge actions proceed from the muscles and the brain, but let them not make any deep impression on the mind.

How can this be done? We see that the impression of any action to which we attach ourselves, remains. I may meet hundreds of persons during the day, and among them meet also one whom I love; and when I retire at night, I may try to think of all the faces I saw, but only that faces comes before the mind – the face which I met perhaps only for one minute, and which I loved; all the others have vanished. My attachment to this particular person caused a deeper impression on my mind than all the other faces. Physiologically, the impressions have all been the same; every one of the faces that I saw pictured itself on the retina, and the brain took the pictures in, and yet there was no similarity of effect upon the mind. Most of the faces, perhaps, were entirely new faces, about which I have never thought before, but that one face if which I got only a glimpse found associations inside. Perhaps I had pictured him in my mind for years, knew hundreds of things about him, and this one new vision of him awakened hundreds of sleeping memories in my mind and this one impression having been repeated perhaps a hundred times more than those of the different faces together, will produce a great effect on the mind.

Therefore, be “unattached”; let things work, let brain centres work; work incessantly, but let not a ripple conquer the mind. Work as if you were a stranger in this land, a sojourner; work incessantly, but do not bind yourselves; bondage is terrible. This world is not our habitation; it is only one of the many stages through which we are passing. Remember that great saying of the *Sankhya*, “The whole of nature is for the soul, not the soul for nature.” The very reason of nature’s existence is for the education of the soul; it has no

other meaning it is there because the soul must have knowledge, and through knowledge free itself. If we remember this always, we shall never be attached to nature; we shall know that nature is a book which we are to read; and that when we have gained the required knowledge, the book is of no more value to us. Instead of that, however we are identifying ourselves with nature; we are thinking that the soul is for nature, that the spirit is for the flesh, and, as the common saying has it, we think that man “lives to eat” and “not eats to live”. We are continually making this mistake; we are regarding nature as ourselves and are becoming attached to it; and as soon as this attachment comes, there is the deep impression on the soul, which binds us down and makes us work not from freedom but like slaves.

The whole gist of this teaching is that you should work like a *master* and not as a *slave*; work incessantly, but do not do slave’s work. Do you not see how everybody works? Nobody can be altogether at rest; ninety-nine per cent of mankind work like slaves, and the result is misery; it is all selfish work. Work through freedom! Work through love! The word “love” is very difficult to understand; love never comes until there is freedom. There is no true love possible in the slave. If you buy a slave and tie him down in chains and make him work for you, he will work like a drudge, but there will be no love in him. So when we ourselves work for the things of the world as slaves there can be no love in us and our work is not true work. This is true of work done for relatives and friends and is true of work done for our own selves. Selfish work is slave’s work; and here is a test. Every act of love brings happiness;

there is no act of love which does not bring peace and blessedness as its reaction. Real existence, real knowledge, and real love are eternally connected with one another, and three in one; where one of them is, the others also must be; they are the three aspects of the One without a second – The Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. When that existence becomes relative, we see it as the world; that knowledge becomes in its turn modified into the knowledge of the things of the world; and that bliss forms the foundation of all true love known to the heart of man. Therefore true love can never react so as to cause pain either to the lover or to the beloved. Suppose a man loves a woman; he wishes to have her all to himself and feels extremely

jealous about her every movement; he wants her to sit near him, to stand near him, and to eat and move at his bidding. He is a slave to her and wishes to have her as his slave. That is not love; it is kind of morbid affection of the slave, insinuating itself as love. It cannot be love, because it is painful; if she does not do what he wants, it brings him pain. With love there is no painful reaction; love only brings a reaction of bliss; if it does not, it is not love; it is mistaking something else for love. When you have succeeded in loving your husband, your wife, your children, the whole world, the universe, in such a manner that there is no reaction of pain or jealousy, no selfish feeling, then you are in a fit state to be unattached.



Swami Vivekananda Temple at Belur Math

Our Vision

Awake! Arise! Awake!
Stop not till the goal
is reached!
(Swami Vivekananda)

The society's fervent prayer at this stage is for continuous growth of the sub-centre as part of the Sydney Centre in reverence of the ideals and teachings of the Holy Trinity.

▪ **Regular Arati Service:**

Devotees have been blessed to be able to participate in the vesper service held every evening at 7pm at the newly acquired Ashram from December 2003.

▪ **Public lectures in Melbourne:**

Pujyapada Srimat Swami Sridharanadaji will continue to share his profound spiritual wisdom through a series of inspiring discourses based on the Mundaka Upanishad and the Bhagavad Gita. These discourses are to be held on a monthly basis.

▪ **Future planning and Vision:**

With the acquisition of an Ashram the Society is focused towards redefining its schedule of events, programs and activities.

▪ **Book Shop News:**

The Society has a host of resources that are available for one's spiritual consumption. These encompass an extensive range of religious texts, audio and video recordings and related materials. These are made accessible during Arati Services at the Ashram and during the public lectures. Members may also be contacted in regard to purchases.

Donations: There has been a formal appeal made in a public forum as well as in written communications to devotees in which devotees and well-wishers have been invited to pledge their financial support towards the financial growth of the Ashram. The Society looks forward to the support of all spiritual seekers and fellow-devotees.

The Symbol of the Sri Ramakrishna Mission

Our Seal

“The wavy waters in the picture are symbolic of Karma, the lotus, of Bhakti, and the rising-sun, of Jnana. The encircling serpent is indicative of Yoga and awakened Kundalini Shakti, while the swan in the symbol stands for the Paramatman. Therefore, the idea of the picture is that by the union of Karma, Jnana, Bhakti and yoga, the vision of the Paramatman is obtained.”

- Swami Vivekananda



FURTHER SPIRITUAL GEMS

According to Sri Ramakrishna, to accept life after transcending its limitations is the last divine sacrifice. To labour is to pray. To have and hold is as stern a trust as to quit and avoid. Life itself is religion. True to this ideal of its Patron Saint, the Ramakrishna Mission has the twin methods of discipline, namely ‘work’ and ‘worship’; or rather as its members say, “Work is worship.”

One day when young Swami Vivekananda begged his Master to grant him the boon of a spiritual ecstasy in which the disciple could keep his mind above for four or five days together, coming down occasionally to the physical plane for a few minutes to eat some morsels of food, Sri Ramakrishna answered reproachfully, “Why are you so anxious to see God with your eyes closed? Can’t you see Him with your eyes open? Worship God through suffering humanity.”

The next edition of REACH would include as its feature article excerpts from the discourses based on the Mundaka Upanishad and the Bhagavad Gita.

Resources

The following authentic sources that have been consulted in compiling all relevant information are available for purchase through the Society:

1. Sri Ramakrishna: The Great Master Vol 1 by Swami Saradananda (A direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna).
2. Tales and Parables of Sri Ramakrishna: President of Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai.
3. The Gospel of the Holy Mother: Publishers Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras.
4. Sri Sarada Devi: The Holy Mother: life and Teachings by Swami Tapasyananda.
5. Holy Mother by Swami Nikhilananda (Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York).
6. The Complete Works Of Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Vivekananda on Sri Ramakrishna

The time was ripe for one to be born, who in one body, would have the brilliant intellect of Shankara and the wonderfully expansive, infinite heart of Chaitanya; one who would see in every sect the same spirit working, the same God: one who would see God in every being, one whose heart would weep for the poor, for the weak, for the outcast, for the downtrodden, for everyone in this world, inside India or outside India; and at the same time whose grand brilliant intellect could conceive of such noble thoughts as would harmonize all conflicting sects, not only in India but outside of India, and bring a marvellous harmony, the universal religion of head and heart into existence. Such a man was born. He was a strange man – this Sri Ramakrishna.

(Swami Vivekananda)
Sri Ramakrishna: A Biography In Pictures. Advaita Ashram.

Address all correspondence to

Secretary, Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Victoria
7 Judy Court, Vermont, Victoria 3133
email: vedanta_melb@hotmail.com

For more information please contact the committee members.

President	.....	Revered Swami Sridharanandaji	
Vice President	.....	Mrs Nandita Bhattacharjee	9574 8463
Secretary	.....	Mr Suresh Ravinutala	9803 6154
Treasurer	.....	Mr Govindan S. Aiyer	9543 4091
Member	.....	Dr Ajit Ghosh	9555 3829
Member	.....	Mr Vierend Ramsaran	9752 9981
Member	.....	Mrs Puloma Mukerjee	9850 8750
Member	.....	Mr Moulinath Ganguly	9561 0793
Member	.....	Mr Karuppan Chockalingam	9819 1755
Member	.....	Mr Mohana Krishnan	9801 6174

HARI OM TAT SAT