



JANUARY 2022 -VOLUME 20 NUMBER 01

# The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

## FEBRUARY 2022 Calendar



**Sri Sri Swamiji  
Birth Celebration**  
Zushi 20 February

## Birthdays

**Swami Brahmananda**  
Wednesday, 2 February

**Swami  
Trigunatitananda**  
Friday, 4 February

**Swami Adbhutananda**  
Wednesday, 14 February

## Zushi Events

While COVID restrictions had been lifted by the Japanese government in September 2021, new variants require we continue to observe stringent precautions.

**See page 02 for more  
event details!**



## ✧ Thus Spake ✧

*"Through spiritual disciplines the ties of past Karma are cut asunder. But the realisation of God cannot be achieved without ecstatic love for Him. Do you know the significance of Japa and spiritual disciplines? By these the power of sense organs is subdued."*

- Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi

*"The person who restrains his organs of action, but continues to dwell in his mind on the objects of the senses, deludes himself and is called a hypocrite."*

- Sri Krishna

16 January 2022  
Zushi Monthly Retreat

## Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi's 169th Birth Celebration PM Session Talk

**Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi**  
by Swami Medhasananda

*[Talk begins on page 3]*

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## Vedanta Society of Japan

### Message Regarding Monthly Programmes for FEBRUARY 2022

Happy New Year! The Vedanta Society of Japan continues to observe social distancing, mask wearing, and avoiding the crowding of programme areas. As attendance to programmes remains space-limited, please contact us if you wish to attend any of the programmes.

Swami Medhasananda, President  
Vedanta Society of Japan

### FEBRUARY 2022 Calendar of Programmes

2nd (Wed) February - Zoom  
**Weekly Upanishad Study Class**  
8:30 ~9:30 (in Japanese only)

5th (Sat) February  
**Bhagavad Gita Study Class at the Indian Embassy**  
\* Video uploaded later  
10:30 ~12:00 (In Japanese only)

9th (Wed) February - Zoom  
**Weekly Upanishad Study Class**  
8:30 ~9:30 (in Japanese only)

13th (Sun) February  
**Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna Study Class**  
Live Streaming and Zoom  
14:00 ~16:00 (in Japanese only)  
\* For Zoom contact: zoom.nvk@gmail.com

16th (Wed) February - Zoom  
**Weekly Upanishad Study Class**  
8:30 ~9:30 (in Japanese only)

20th (Sun) February  
**Monthly Zushi Retreat**  
**Sri Swami Vivekananda Birthday Celebration**  
Live Steaming and Zoom 11:00~16:30  
AM and PM Sessions  
\* RESERVATIONS REQUIRED TO ATTEND \*  
Contact prior 11th February - 046-873-0428

< Live Streaming >

[Click here](#) to go to YouTube.

< Online Study Class on Zoom >

[Click here](#) to go to the Japanese page 'Zoom'.

## **Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi**

A talk by Swami Medhasananda

I must say I find it is a little difficult to give a discourse on Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, the spiritual consort of Sri Ramakrishna. I find it easier to talk on Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda—their lives were full of so many interesting and important incidents, as they were such unique manifestations. Holy Mother, on the other hand, was so simple and unassuming. Outwardly there is nothing really extraordinary, spectacular, charismatic or dramatic in Her life. This is where the difficulty in giving a talk lies.

As per the tradition of married women in India, She always kept Her head completely veiled in mixed company. No one could see Her eyes or read Her reactions to things. Yet again, Her simple and unassuming nature was Her greatest veil, keeping who She was hidden from most. Behind this ordinary facade was something so extraordinary, the apparently usual being so very unusual.

In fact, it was Sri Ramakrishna, Himself, who first made His disciples aware of the extraordinariness of Holy Mother. If not so, even the direct monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna would have had no idea of the greatness of Holy Mother or Her unique and divine personality.

### **Who is Greater, the Worshipped or the Worshipper?**

Let me ask you, who is greater the worshipper or the worshipped—the one who is worshipped or the one who worships the worshipped? Our natural response, of course, is that the one who is worshipped is greater than the worshipper. From this point of view, Sri Ramakrishna's greatness is quite understandable for the this godman is worshipped by millions of souls. However, when we see Sri Sarada Devi was literally worshipped by Sri Ramakrishna the conclusion becomes irresistible that in one sense Holy Mother Sarada Devi was even greater than Sri Ramakrishna, though they were twin aspects of the same spiritual entity.

Let me add that She also accepted this worship from Sri Ramakrishna without any objection and without being the least bit uncomfortable or embarrassed. Ordinarily it would be unthinkable for the Holy Mother to behave like that, considering Her tremendous bashfulness and profound respect for Sri Ramakrishna.

All the articles of the worship had been prepared and flower and food offerings laid out in Sri Ramakrishna's room at Dakshineswar with a seat or the worshipped. All this had been arranged. Sarada Devi was then summoned to come to Ramakrishna's and asked to take Her seat, and the moment Sri Ramakrishna began the ritualistic worship Holy Mother went into samadhi.

Samadhi means what? She immediately became aware of Her real nature, that She was the embodiment of the Divine Mother, the primordial energy. So completely identifying Herself with the Divine Mother, She accepted the worship of Sri Ramakrishna. Had She not immediately become aware of Her own true nature, She would never have been able to accept the worship of Sri Ramakrishna. As the Divine Mother of the universe She accepted the worship by one who looked upon Himself as the child of the Divine Mother.

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## Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi (from page 3)

At the conclusion of the puja, Sri Ramakrishna also entered into samadhi. Here we have both the worshipper and the worshipped entering samadhi and becoming united in the level of supra-consciousness. This means the same Brahman appeared as Ramakrishna, the godman, and as Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother. When both later returned to the physical plane, Holy Mother offered mental pranam to Sri Ramakrishna and left His room.

After that episode, did Holy Mother ever bring up to others that while they worshipped Sri Ramakrishna, She had in fact been worshipped by Him? Did She ever even entertain such a boast? Never. So one becomes wonderstruck to imagine Her spiritual height that She could accept and absorb Sri Ramakrishna's worship? I share this example to demonstrate that we should not only admire Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi as the wife of Sri Ramakrishna, but by Her own right, Holy Mother deserves our greatest respect as the embodiment of the Divine Mother.

Why do I point out this distinction? Because most householder disciples of Sri Ramakrishna of that day looked upon Holy Mother merely as the wife of their Guru, Sri Ramakrishna. Therefore, Sarada Devi should be respected because She is the wife of the Master.

### What Kind of Mother Are You?

Once the very frank and heroic disciple of the Master, Girish Chandra Ghosh, asked Holy Mother, "I want to know what sort mother you are! Are you our mother as the wife of our Guru? Are you 'mother' as we refer to senior ladies? Moreover, surely you have not given birth to us! Then why should we all call you mother?" Holy Mother's simple and full of conviction answer was, "I am not 'Mother' because I am the wife of your Guru. I am not your adopted mother, not a vague mother. I am your 'real mother'. I am your Eternal Mother."



All the mothers we see around us are embodiments of Divine Mother. In the Chandi scripture on Mother Durga it is written 'That Divine Mother who has manifested Herself as all mothers, I bow down to that Divine Mother.' So the Divine Mother manifests Herself as all mothers and motherhood itself. In this sense Holy Mother is the mother to us all, and not only in this life, but our previous lives, and any future life, because She is the embodiment of the Divine Mother.

Sri Ramakrishna played His Divine role as an incarnation of God and world teacher by whose power? It was by the power of Holy Mother as the embodiment of 'Shakti'. Avatara Lila - incarnation of God's play - is always made possible by the power of the Divine Mother. Sri Ramakrishna remarked that unless Brahman is united with Prakriti, Brahman cannot act as an incarnation of God. So Ramakrishna is the embodiment of Brahman by the power of the Divine Mother incarnated as Sarada Devi.

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### **Shankara Takes Refuge in Mother**

There is a story that Adi Shankaracharya (Shankara) would not believe in Shakti and would only believe in Brahman. One day it happened that he was sick in Benares and became very weak. He got the idea that he wanted to touch the Ganga, but the city being situated on a high mound, the ghat and the steps to the river were so steep he gave up this idea. Instead, he would wait for someone to bring up some Ganga water for him. He saw an old woman about to bathe in the Ganga and asked, “Mother, after your bath, would you kindly bring me back some Ganga water?”

The woman was surprised by the request and gestured toward the river “Why? You go!” Shankara explained that he was very weak and had no power to go down to the river and climb back up by himself.

“What? You don’t believe in power! You don’t believe in Shakti, so why do you claim you have no power?” The old woman was none other than the Divine Mother teaching Shankara that faith in Brahman alone will not do. One has to believe in the Divine Mother, Shakti, as well, otherwise one’s spiritual knowledge and realisation become incomplete. Shankara later composed the great stotram (hymn of praise) ‘Bhavani Ashtakam’ containing several verses, each ending in ‘Oh Mother Bhavani (Durga) You are my only refuge.’

### **How Will Understanding Come?**

Even great souls need belief and devotion to Shakti to be spiritually complete. Belief in Brahman alone or belief in Shakti alone, will not complete our realisation. When one believes in both Brahman and Shakti, and that both, though two, are in fact but one, then one’s spiritual realisation is complete. The moment the universe is created, Mother’s play starts. This universe is the domain of the Divine Mother. Where She loves to sport.

Sri Ramakrishna repeatedly told His young disciples, “Know that the Mother who is in the Kali Temple and the Mother (Sarada Devi) who lives in the nahabat (music tower) are one and the same. Some time after Ramakrishna left His mortal body, Swami Vijnananandaji as vice-president of the Ramakrishna Mission and later as president, gave initiation to devotees. Vijnanananda would often talk of Sri Ramakrishna alone when giving advice and during his discourses. He then had a vision of Sri Ramakrishna before him who asked why he only spoke of Him. “Why don’t you talk of Her (Holy Mother) too? She is actually the giver of liberation, not me! Remember to talk of Her, too, otherwise how will the devotees get liberation?” She binds, and unless She is gracious, She will not loose the ties that bind us. For freedom from bondage, we should pray to Her that She may cut our bonds asunder and release us from bondage. It is She who binds, and it is She who liberates.

One important thing as I look back upon my own life, and as I become more and more conscious and aware of spiritual life, an understanding dawns on me. If we look upon a photo or image of Sri Ramakrishna or Holy Mother and we respect and worship

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#### • Thought of the Month •

“Let life be beautiful like summer flowers  
and death like autumn leaves”

– Rabindranath Tagore



## **Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi** (from page 3)

them, this is fine, but our spiritual level doesn't really rise. If we want our spiritual life to become more enriched and raise our spiritual understanding, we have to comprehend the real nature of Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother. How will this understanding of their real nature come?

As we know, there is nothing very extraordinary about these two in photographs. But the more we study about them, and the more we think about them, and the more we meditate on their lives and teachings, then more and more we understand that the photo or image is but the apparent, the reality is so much deeper and deeper. It is so very vast. One good example is *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Reading it once is fine, but reading it more and more, again and again, brings about more understanding. The more light we get from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, the more we grow. We may not be aware of it, but definitely our spiritual life becomes richer, and the richer our spiritual life grows, the more light we get from *The Gospel* as we read again. In this way, by reading and thinking and meditating, the more we can appreciate the real personality of Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother.

That is why Swami Shivanandaji said, "When Sri Ramakrishna was alive we heard many things from Him, but we could hardly understand the deeper meaning of what He said. In fact, Sri Ramakrishna would say, 'Just listen now, later you will understand.'" Many years after Ramakrishna's passing and the young devotees were now elderly monks and after having performed much tapasya (austerities) and other spiritual practices, the same monks would say, "Now we understand the real meaning of what Sri Ramakrishna used to say to us." To a lesser extent perhaps, we should try to understand more the real meaning, the real purport, of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi's personality and teachings. This will help us to grow spiritually. Even without the study of Vedanta, this is one way we can develop ourselves spiritually.

### **We Are Still Far Away**

As you know, Sri Ramakrishna worshipped the image of Kali at the Dakshineswar temple. He would also often talk of Ma Kali as the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the universe. When talking this way Keshab Chandra Sen of the Brahmo Samaj, a group who believed only in the formless aspect of God, would become amused with wonder at how such a small image of Mother Kali could produce the vast universe. Logically it is impossible. When Keshab expressed their doubts and confusion regarding this, Sri Ramakrishna gave the following example: "Look Keshab, as we look up at the sun, it is but a small disc, but is it really so small?" The more we approach the sun closer and closer, the more we understand and it grows bigger and bigger. "Now you are far away from Mother Kali," Ramakrishna continued, "but the closer you approach (understand) Mother Kali, you will begin to see She is not a small image at all; She is actually infinite." Yes, She is bigger than the biggest, and greater than the greatest.

In the same way, why do our photos of Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother look so small to us? Because we are far away from them. It is not a physical proximity or distance, but it is a mental and spiritual distance. However, the more we approach them in a spiritual way, that is, through long and profound prayer and meditation on their real nature, making us pure in body, mind and spirit, then the more we can realise the vastness and depth of their personalities. Then we shall realise that Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi are none other than Brahman, Himself, and the Divine Mother, Herself. •

**Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi 169th Birthday Celebration  
Japan Vedanta Society Zushi Centre**

Date: Sunday, 16 January 2022  
Venue: Annexe Building

**Schedule**

- 06:00 Mangalarty, Chanting and Bhajan
- 06:30 Meditation
- 07:45 Breakfast
- 11:00 Puja, Food offering, Arati, Flower offering
- 12:30 Lunch Prasad (Main Building)
- 14:45 Chanting
- Hymn: Swami Divyanathanandaji
- Reading from The Gospel of Holy Mother
- Talk: Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi
- Speaker: Swami Medhasanandaji
- Interpreter: Leonardo Arvarez
- Devotional Songs
- Meditation
- 16:30 Tea (Main Building)
- 18:00 Arati, Bhajan, Reading
- Meditation
- 20:00 Supper





Puja





Arati





Prasad



PM Talk



Bhajan





Christmas Eve Celebration Zushi Vedanta Centre 2021

## **Similarities in the Life and Teachings Sri Ramakrishna and Lord Jesus** A talk by Leonardo Alvarez

Sri Ramakrishna and Lord Jesus share many similarities in the story of their lives and in their teachings, some of which I will share briefly this evening.

### **Both Born Under Foreign Rule**

They were both born at a time where their country was colonised by a powerful foreign empire. When Jesus was born Israel was a Roman colony, and when Sri Ramakrishna was born, India was under British rule. Also, even before becoming a Roman colony, Israel had also been a Greek colony, and under both regimes religious persecution was rampant, and many Jews had relinquished their own religious values and embracing secular ones imported by the Greeks and Romans.

### **Spirituality Under Seige**

The priestly caste of the Jewish people, the Levites, which were comprised of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the zealots, scribes, and so forth, had very narrow views of Jewish Law and tyrannised their own people with them. They imposed heavy duties on the people, interpreting the Law to their own benefit while failing to fulfil it themselves, and

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quarrelled with other sects about the most minute and insignificant aspects of the Torah and so forth. Prophets had since long been absent in the land of Israel and spirituality had all but dried up.



Similarly, when Sri Ramakrishna was born, many people were doubting the veracity of Vedic teachings and were becoming atheists or agnostics in great numbers. They were fully embracing the materialistic mentality imposed by the British Empire in its attempt to obliterate Indian culture through ‘Western education.’ Innumerable sects among Vaishnavas, Shivaists, Vedantists, Brahmos and so forth, existed, all quarrelling with each other, affirming that theirs, and only theirs, was the correct and true view; intellectuals considered Vedic religious ideas and recorded Yogic experiences as being nothing more than fanciful stories. Hardly any realised beings arose that could demonstrate and harmonise all these contradictory views, and show the correct example of what Indian religious life truly was about, to lead their countrymen from darkness to light.

### **Truth Re-established**

With their advent, Lord Jesus and Sri Ramakrishna re-established the truths of Judaism and the Vedic religion, and made it available not only to their own countrymen, but to the whole world. As Jesus said: *“I have not come to destroy but fulfil”* (Matthew 5:17), He fulfilled the essence of what a perfect Jew should be according to the Torah, and even beyond that, Jesus showed what a perfect devotee of God should be like. Moreover, unlike the irrational impositions of that time by the Jewish priest craft, which stated that people could only worship in the main Temple of Jerusalem, Jesus broke that restriction and showed that worship was not limited to a specific geographical location, but rather, that the heart and spirit of man was the Eternal temple from which to offer worship. He said: *“The hour cometh when ye shall neither on this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship... But the hour cometh, and now is when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.”* (John 4:21-23). Likewise, the Jewish so far had considered all foreign races as being barbaric and polluted, and that they had no chance to salvation, but in the Gospels we see how Jesus grants salvation to Samaritans, Greeks and Romans alike, making no distinction based on race or creed.

Sri Ramakrishna fulfilled a similar mission, and perhaps his task was even more Herculean. Although the Jewish Torah (the book of the Law) is complex, in Israel there existed not so much a variety of religious sects and philosophies as in India. In the land of Bharata there were never theological restrictions and innumerable sects and doctrines emerged and continued to exist, even to this day. Sri Ramakrishna undertook the superhuman task of experiencing the ultimate truth through the practices of the main religious sects of India, exemplified through the path of Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga and even Hatha Yoga. Not only that, He did what other Incarnations had not done, and went and attested the truth of all previous Incarnations, experiencing

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the same state of supreme realisation, for instance, through Islam and Christianity, thus harmonising within himself not only all the different schools of Hinduism, but of the world's religions.

He did away with conventions of caste, even going so far as cleaning the toilet of the sweepers with his own hair to obliterate the idea of superiority in Himself of being of the Brahmin caste. He declared that all devotees belonged to a single class, and hence they could sit, and eat, drink and pray together, against the then prevailing custom of extreme segregation of caste, of 'no-touchism' and disdain for foreigners, whom were called 'mlecchas'. Hence Sri Ramakrishna set the "mould," by which any human being, irrespective of his religion or creed, can apply himself to cast the figure of his spiritual life. This is indeed the sign of the teachings of the Yuga-Avatara, the 'Incarnation of God fit for this age,' in this era of globalisation, where sectarianism and narrow-mindedness cannot exist anymore, since the whole world is now fully interconnected and knowledge is in the palm of our hands.

### **Other Similarities**

Many other similarities between Lord Jesus and Sri Ramakrishna also come to mind:

- They were both born to poor, but very pious families, who faced persecution during the time of their birth.
- Both manifested extraordinary wisdom and faith at a very young age and would solve the most intricate theological problems of the priests or pundits, and people would be amazed at their precocious wisdom.
- Both lost their fathers when they were young and subsequently underwent a very intense period of Sadhana.

Nothing is known of Lord Jesus' life from ages 13 to 30, but legend has it that he was practicing intense spiritual disciplines in solitude, and some even allude that he reached Kashmir, India, to preach to a colony of Jews that had escaped a few decades before after the Romans had destroyed the Temple of Jerusalem for the first time, and to learn from Indian sadhus.

Likewise, Sri Ramakrishna went an unbelievably intense period of spiritual practices for 12 years, some alone and others under the tutelage of different teachers. When both finished their training, they emerged as world-teachers.

- They both mingled with sinners and saints alike, but they were particularly intent in saving the fallen and downtrodden, as well as the poor, humble and pious.

Lord Jesus saved prostitutes, tax collectors and sinners; Sri Ramakrishna also saved great sinners like Girish Ghosh and blessed the fallen women who were actresses at the Star Theatre in Kolkata.

- They both used day to day examples as parables to teach sublime truths.

## Christmas Eve 2021 (from page 13)

- They both preached supreme renunciation, inner and outer; although Sri Ramakrishna perhaps was more benevolent in the sense that He also showed the path by which householders could follow to reach God. With Lord Jesus we find only a message of supreme renunciation, and it is only later on through the teaching of the saints and the Church, who interpreted it for the householders also to live up to them according to their own capacity.

- Likewise, both godmen assumed the sins of others and had to die because of it; Lord Jesus on the Cross, and Sri Ramakrishna of an excruciating cancer.

- Both godmen were celibates all their lives, although perhaps Sri Ramakrishna pushed the bar up by remaining so even after marriage.

- It is said that both Jesus and Sri Ramakrishna had very strong physiques when young. For instance, when Lord Jesus expelled the money changers and sellers in front of the temple, his figure was awe inspiring and frightening, and all ran away at seeing his rage. Had he been weak they would have laughed at him. Likewise, Sri Ramakrishna was very stout and his strong constitution allowed him to bear the brunt of the most intense forms of tapasya.

- They both predicted their deaths and circumstances, with Lord Jesus announcing that He would be put to death by the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem and Sri Ramakrishna foretelling that when His picture would be worshipped at homes and innumerable people would come to Him because they knew He was the Avatara, then He would leave His mortal body behind.

- They both prayed to God with the pure and unalloyed faith of a child. Jesus would call God “Abba,” which is Aramaic for “Papa,” and what children called their fathers. Sri Ramakrishna would call on Mother Kali uttering “Ma, Ma,” just as an Indian child would call his own mother. Jesus said: “*I and my Father are one*” (John 10:30) and Sri Ramakrishna also said: “*I and my Mother Kali are one.*” Jesus said: “*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*” (Matthew 7:7-8). Sri Ramakrishna used to say: “Whosoever prays intently and with yearning to God, God will answer those prayers.”

- Both called for a complete renewal of self when accepting the teachings and to keeping oneself pure. Jesus said: “*And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.*” (Mark 2:22). The new bottle signifies the pure mind and heart of the aspirant and the new wine signifies the spiritual teachings of Jesus. Sri Ramakrishna also said that if yogurt was put on a pot where curd had been kept, it would go sour, so to keep the yogurt fresh it had to be put in a new pot. This meant that the mind of the pure devotees, such as the youngsters who had not yet touched ‘lust and gold’, was like the new pot, where the yogurt, that is, spiritual instruction, could be kept fresh. Otherwise, it would go sour, meaning, the spiritual teachings would not bear fruit properly.

Thank you and Merry Christmas.

## • Story to Remember •

### Shopping with Swami Brahmanandaji

by S. Venkateswaran

Despite his often serious nature and great spirituality, Swami Brahmananda had a childlike simplicity. During his stay at the Ramakrishna monastery in Madras he would often send for his cook in the afternoons, playfully joke with him, and then perhaps dictate humorous letters to be sent to the cook at Belur Monastery—signing them with his own cook's name. He loved both of the men very much and they enjoyed the Swami's humour. They, in turn, would reply to his letters and thus a regular exchange of correspondence would begin. As the letters were in Bengali, I could not learn their contents, but I was told that mixed with the humour were many spiritual and thought-provoking words.

Also in the afternoons, the Swami would walk up and down the hall of the monastery and I would accompany him. He would discuss a variety of subjects. On occasions, he would suddenly grow quite serious and close his eyes. This would fill me with a feeling of awe and reverence, and I would not say another word to him until he spoke again. In the mornings and evenings he would take walks between the home and the monastery, and I would go with him. On such occasions he would take some small coins with him. One morning we went to the vegetable market at Mylapore. He asked the vendor the cost of a huge basket of eggplant. Thinking he was only curious, the man did not reply. The Swami went to the next vendor and asked the same questions. The man said that altogether they would cost between twenty and thirty rupees. Then Swami Brahmananda gave the vendor one pie [one-twelfth of an anna] and received one eggplant. He did the same thing with a vendor selling spinach.

After leaving the market place, he told me to give these two vegetables to the cook and have them served to him that day. When I told this story to the other swamis, they only laughed. But later on I learned that within a few minutes after Swami Brahmananda had purchased the two vegetables, those two vendor's lots were sold out. The next time that the Swami visited the marketplace, every vendor asked the Swami to purchase a vegetable from him. But he ignored them.

Also while staying at the monastery, Swami Brahmananda gave *sannyas* to a number of *brahmacharis*, and initiated several others. Others also urged me to take initiation from Swami Brahmananda. At that time I did not really understand the significance of initiation and was unsure of how to approach him. But one day I told Swami that I wanted to be initiated. "You want initiation?" he said. "Why?" When I insisted, he told me to come to him at noon the following day after my bath.

When I arrived for initiation, he went to the shrine room and began to meditate in front of Sri Ramakrishna's picture. Then he initiated me. Immediately afterwards, I felt supremely happy, as though I now possessed the greatest thing imaginable. Before his departure from Madras, he presented me with a string of rudraksha beads to be used for japa.

*Excerpted from 'Memories of Swami Brahmananda' by S. Venkateswaran <vedanta.org>*

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