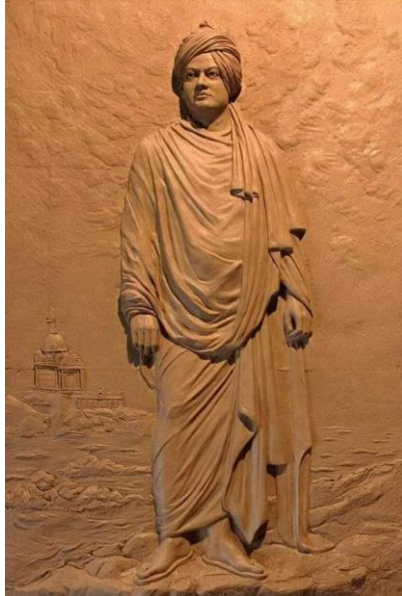




FEBRUARY 2024 -VOLUME 22 NUMBER 02

# The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN



## Thus Spake

All the powers in the universe are already ours. It is we who have put our hands before our eyes and cry that it is dark. Know that there is no darkness around us. Take the hands away and there is the light which was from the beginning.

- Swami Vivekananda

The great new mantra today is "Work" and 'Hard Work'; along with Hard Work, intelligent work co-operative teamwork. All great undertakings are product of teamwork. We can meet the challenge of freedom only when we have learnt this character-efficiency involved in teamwork, and intelligent hard work. This is the philosophy which we have to learn consciously, not unconsciously, somehow stumbling into it.

- Swami Ranganathananda

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# Monthly Program Schedule

for

## March 2024

2nd (Sat)

**Bhagavad Gita Study Class at the Indian Embassy**

10:30 ~ 12:00

(Japanese Only) (Video Uploaded Later)

6th (Wed)

**Weekly Upanishad Study Class**

8:30 ~ 9:30

Zoom (Japanese Only)

12th (Tue)

**Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna Study Class**

14:00 ~ 16:00

Livestream and Zoom (Japanese Only)

17th (Sun)

**Sri Ramakrishna Birthday Celebration**

10:30 ~ 17:30

Livestreaming

Prior reservation is necessary. Telephone: 046-873-0428

27th (Wed)

**Weekly Upanishad Study Class**

8:30 ~ 9:30

Zoom (Japanese Only)

## How to Resist the Onrush of Negative Emotions, Part 2

By Swami Medhasananda during Annual Outdoor Retreat held at Izu from 9~11<sup>th</sup> Sep 2023

The last day of the retreat, the group departed just before 4 am to the beach called “Shira Hama” or “White Beach”. There the group sat in a long line along the shoreline and meditated as they saw the sunrise rise with all its glory, the light breaking through the clouds in the horizon. After about one hour of meditation, the group sat close together, chanted a song for Sri Ramakrishna and another one for Holy Mother guided by Swami Medhasananda, and read from the Bhagavad Gita and heard a short explanation from Maharaj. The group read verses of 11 to 26, and then 70 of Chapter 2.

Verses 11 to 26 explain the essence of Vedanta, Maharaj said, while the purport of verse 70 is: “*As into the ocean-brimful, and still- flow the waters, even so the Muni into whom enter all desires, he, and not the desirer of desires, attains to peace*”. This verse Maharaj made the group chant, since the group was literally seeing water flowing from a canal into the majestic ocean, unperturbed by the water entering into it.

The group then went back to the temple-hotel and the class resumed in the morning after breakfast.

Maharaj began by saying that our mind is always restless and perturbed, but one who can control his mind is truly strong and happy. Such persons’ body and mind are pure and sensitive..

The topic at hand is then how to control our minds? We need first to take responsibility upon our shoulders. If our current state is bad due to negative karma, our future is bright if we do good works now. Also, we must recognize that oftentimes we are very lenient towards our own mistakes but very harsh regarding that of others. With such an attitude, we cannot progress.

Taming the mind is much more difficult than taming elephants. Our present, perturbed mental state, is due to the presence of high Tamas and Rajas. Hence, we have to diminish them while also increasing the amount of Sattva. Here our Samskaras play an important role, since their accumulated effect determines our mental states.

Moreover, we need to remember the purpose of our practice. The reward for the most arduous practice is also the highest. If we buy something at a 100-yen shop, or a very cheap car, they will not last long because they are not good quality. But if we buy something of higher quality – not luxurious - at a higher price, then we will enjoy it. You get what you pay for. But we cannot buy happiness with money. *Tapasya* or austerity, is the price we must pay to get happiness.

As our purpose, we must strive to become moral, and also to achieve steady peace, joy and liberation. We want to become Sat-Chit-Ananda, Existence, Consciousness and Bliss Absolute.

For that, we need to take into account the methods and techniques. Here we must make a distinction between Western and Eastern Psychology. Western Psychology, as it is known today, is quite recent, but Eastern Psychology is ancient, with over more than 3000 years of history. The method employed in Western Psychology is *objective*, that is, observing other people’s minds and then arriving at

certain conclusions, which is the method followed by Freud, Ellis and others. On the other hand, Eastern Psychology's approach is more *subjective*, the object of study being one's own mind, which can be analyzed through arduous practice of meditation for many years, for instance. An authority on the subject is Patanjali, an expert meditator, who was both a psychologist and a philosopher.

Western Psychology only considers the Conscious and Sub-Conscious parts of the mind, but Eastern Psychology also takes into account Super-Consciousness, Samskaras and Karma. For instance, some people are born with extraordinary qualities or twins, despite having the same genetic load, end up having very different personalities and lifestyles. How can a man or a woman acquire such extraordinary talents, even if none in their families have them? Or how can twins differ so much if their genes are seemingly identical? These can only be explained as the result of samskaras and actions in former lives.

Another difference between the two is their studies of consciousness during sleep. Western Psychology has made research on different kinds of sleep modes, such as Rapid-Eye Movement (R.E.M.) sleep, but nothing on dreamless sleep, known as *sushupti* in Sanskrit. Eastern Psychology has thoroughly studied it, and even a state of consciousness beyond, that of *Turiya* or Super Consciousness. Hence, it is more holistic, comprehensive and rational.

To control our minds, we need to know how the body and mind truly work. Indian psychology delved deep giving rich descriptions, such as the *Panchakosha*, the five sheaths, comprising *Annamaya Kosha* (sheath of "food", referring to the physical body), *Pranayama Kosha* (sheath of "vital energy"), *Manomaya Kosha* (sheath of the "mind"), *Vijnanamaya Kosha* (sheath of the "intellect") and *Anandamaya Kosha* (sheath of "bliss", coming from the soul). It has also given minute descriptions of the neurophysiological and spiritual centers in the body, the chakras. Namely: *Mūlādhāra* (meaning "root" chakra located at the coccygeal plexus), *Svādhiṣṭhāna* (meaning "established in oneself", located near the sacrum), *Maṇipūra* (meaning "city of jewels", located at the navel area), *Anāhata* (meaning "unstruck sound" of the OM, located near the heart area), *Viśuddha* (meaning "pure", located at the throat), *Ājñā* (meaning "brow, or third eye", located in between the eyebrows) and *Sahasrāra* (meaning "thousand-petalled", located at the crown of the head). Western savants such as Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, J.D. Salinger and Aldous Huxley deeply studied these systems.

Now a word or two on techniques and following them. Once a fox and a cat were talking among themselves. The cat asked: "If a dog suddenly comes barking at you, how will you flee?" the fox said: "I know many ways to escape, so I can easily save myself. But how about you?" the cat simply replied: "I only know one way: climbing up a tree". The fox thought himself very clever because he knew so many ways to escape. Just as they were talking thus, a dog appeared from nowhere, furiously barking at them and ready to charge. The cat escaped immediately by climbing up a tree, but the fox stood there perplexed and unable to choose out of the many ways he knew how to escape.

This does not mean that the various methods are unnecessary. They are needed due to differences in aptitudes and attitudes among people. But we must be able to use them to reach the goal of self-realization. For this purpose, we can summarize 4 main methods.

(1) Discriminating and knowing that only God is real and the rest unreal, (2) Knowing that only our relationship with God is eternal, (3) Knowing that we have no duty and that we are all but caretakers of God's work, that we are His proxies and (4) Loving God helps.

The first one is self-evident. Regarding the second one, our relationships, if we believe in reincarnation as Eastern Psychology posits, we soon realize we have changed our set of parents and family members many a time. When we see this, we can easily discriminate between our eternal relationship with God and our ephemeral relationship with family.

In terms of our work and duty, we should discharge our duties towards family members and others, perfectly. We should not run away from our duties, like Arjuna, who wanted to run away from the battlefield at a crucial time and rather go for a mendicant's life. Sri Krishna sternly advised him otherwise saying: "*Fight O Partha! but remember Me while doing so and offer the results of all works to Me.*" Let us understand that all our talents and gifts are His, and offer all, even the results, to the Lord. This will complete the whole circle, of God giving us energy and talents to do His own work. If we remember these three things, then work becomes worship and *tapasya*, austerity.

The fourth one is loving God. Although Karma Yoga is possible without believing in God, it is much easier if we believe in Him. It also makes it easier to control our mind and senses, because in case we fail repeatedly to control ourselves, we can pray to God to give us strength and perseverance.

Now, there are many ways in which we can control our minds. First, we can scold it and punish it if it misbehaves, by practicing silence, fasting or giving up what the mind likes the most.

We must also choose between short term pleasure versus long term benefit. Think of the case of a diabetic, whose body cannot process sugar due to lack of insulin. Though he knows that eating sweets is very bad for his body, maybe he takes the sweets out of the fridge and eats them when no one is watching. So, this is a decision between *Shreya* and *Preya*, namely of choosing what is hard at first but beneficial in the long term, or choosing what is easy and pleasurable at first but the cause of suffering and repentance in the long term. Our diabetic friend should then practice self-control and avoid taking sweets surreptitiously. But among us there are also who are like *Duryodhan*, who said to Lord Krishna: "I know what is *Dharma*, or righteousness, but I do not want to practice it, and I also know what is *Adharma*, or unrighteousness, but do not want to avoid it."

We can also lovingly entreat our minds to cooperate with us by saying "*If you become fond of this, you will be in great trouble later on.*" Since every one has different issues, we need to think by ourselves, individually, how to solve each and every issue.

The poor man wants food, the rich man wants more money, writers and artists dream of fame and name by publishing books and albums. But for devotees, control of mind is the dearest and most necessary thing. Those who truly want happiness, must eagerly and actively consider how to control their minds.

There are several practices and advices that will help us concentrate better:

1. Do your work with full concentration, whether it is a small or a big job.
2. The object of meditation is very subtle; hence it is not easy to achieve full concentration on it from the beginning.
3. When meditating, practice *viveka* and *vairagya*, firmly saying to your own mind that: “From now on as I sit, I shall only think of the Eternal and be oblivious of all transitory things. I shall not think of family, friends, people I am fond of, work, the future, present or past” Remember verses 33 to 36 of Chapter 6, the Yoga of Meditation (Abhyāsa Yoga).  
33. Arujuna said: “*This Yoga which has been taught by thee, O slayer of Madhu, as characterized by evenness, I do not see the possibility of its lasting endurance, owing to the restlessness of the mind*”  
34. “*Verily, the mind, O Krishna, is restless, turbulent, strong, and unyielding; I regard it quite as hard to achieve its control, as that of the wind.*”  
35. The Blessed Lord said: “*Without doubt, O mighty-armed, the mind is restless and difficult to control; but through diligent practice (abhyāseṇa) and renunciation (vairāgyeṇa), O son of Kuntī, it may be governed.*”  
36. “*Yoga is hard to attain by one of uncontrolled self: such is my conviction; but the self-controlled, striving by right means, can obtain it.*”  
To clarify, *abhyāseṇa*, means constant, unyielding practice, in other words, not missing meditation for a single day. Remember the example of Hafiz.  
*Vairāgyeṇa*, or renunciation, means becoming unattached, giving up desires in one’s mind. Simply wearing gerua, a monk’s robe, will not make one unattached.
4. When working, let us do so being connected with God by practicing Japam, the repetition of God’s name. If we think about worldly things 23 hours a day, then these things and not the thought of God will prop up in our minds during that 1 hour of meditation. However, if we work and do everything connected with God, then concentration becomes easier and the thought of God will easily arise during meditation.
5. If we love God more, if we make Him the center of our lives, if we know He is the Eternal Friend and Companion, then we can easily think of Him during meditation. We need not make special effort to think often and deeply our near and dear ones. Hence if we increase our love for God, it will be easier to think of Him. Also, it often happens we feel sleepy in meditation. The reason is we do not find joy and interest in God. See how enthralled people watch TV series but we do not find the same enthusiasm when they think of God. Yet, the truth is we can only have pure joy by thinking on God.
6. Patience. To master the practice of concentration it takes a long time, Rome was not built in one day.
7. Self-Confidence. We must believe that we will definitely make it no matter how hard it is. There was once a science teacher who also taught children important things about life. He wrote on the blackboard “I cannot” and then asked his students, “Boys! Is what I wrote correct? The students understood what the teacher wants to imply and cried out loudly, “No Sir, it is not correct.” “Then what is to be corrected?” The students said loudly, “Sir, please write, I can.” The teacher was pleased with their answer and then advised, “My dear boys! Always say, yes, I can. Never say, I cannot.”
8. There is another story. Once a CEO of a company which lost 1,000 million due to a natural disaster, conveyed an executive management meeting. He addressed those present, saying: “We

need to make 1,000 million to compensate the loss.” Everybody replied to him “Impossible.” But the CEO sharply retorted: “I did not summon you here to hear you tell me no, I summoned you to tell me how we are going to do it.” Being thus prompted, all members started brainstorming. They finally came up with the idea of making a concert with many famous artists and selling the tickets for revenue. This they did, and they were able to earn back much of what they had lost. So, remember that difficult does not mean impossible, and that “*I can if I think I can.*”

This is true about our striving for controlling the onrush of negative emotions and turning them to the positive ones. We can accomplish this apparently difficult task if we think we can and strive diligently until we reach our goal.

### **Question and Answer Session**

Q: How can we control the impact of a negative environment we cannot avoid being in?

A: You can practice Japam, and you should also avoid looking left and right, and instead only looking straight as you walk.

There is an anecdote of Swami Turiyananda, who went to see Mahatma Gandhi at a rally. Upon reaching the rally, Turiyananda noticed that as Gandhi was walking, he would only look forward, whereas others were looking left and right, turning their heads like chicken. Turiananda, who was a trained Yogi, said that Gandhi had achieved mastery over his senses and mind, and that is why he would only look straight.

Another way is the way of Bhakti, seeing that God dwells in all beings, regardless of their outer appearance. All you see is but the manifestation of God. When Sri Ramakrishna was at Cossipore Garden during his last days, as he was talking with Naren (later Swami Vivekananda) and other direct disciples, Sri Ramakrishna placed his hand on his heart and then made a circular gesture facing outwards. He then asked Narendra by a sign, “What did you understand?”. Narendra replied: “All created objects have come from you.” The Master’s face then beamed with joy. For a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, therefore, the whole universe is nothing but Sri Ramakrishna. For a devotee of Jesus or Buddha, or of any other Chosen Deity, he can think that his “Chosen Deity or God is talking through me, God is listening through others, I am serving God in others.”

One more way is that of Jnāna, seeing that people around are nothing but skeletons that are being moved by the power of the soul. That will help you concentrate on the essence, the Atman, beyond physical appearances.

In reality, we need to combine various methods according to the needs of the moment. Essentially there are 2 types of practice. (1) Is the study of scriptures and practice of meditation in the safety and seclusion of our room, and (2) is real life practice, in the field of temptations, when we are really put into the test in terms of our control of mind, our purity, our humility, etc. So, the real criteria is how well we fare in the real world tests, and the better we do the more it shows we have assimilated what we have studied and meditated on.

As you see, there are many types of practices available, so we must choose the ones appropriate for us, and apply them in our daily lives.

# Life and Teachings of Holy Mother Sarada Devi

By Swami Medhasananda during Monthly Retreat held in January 2024

You know about the life of Holy Mother. Her life was quite simple, but very profound. Once Girish Chandra Ghosh, pointing to Holy Mother, addressing a gathering of devotees, said ‘This lady, who looks like a village widow, can you believe it, that She is the Mother of the Universe?’ Apparently, she is just a village widow, but actually, She is the Universal Mother, the Primordial Energy.

Life of Sri Ramakrishna is an ideal for monks, whereas life of Holy Mother is an ideal for the householders. Those young boys who came in touch with Sri Ramakrishna and became His disciples, were men of extraordinary renunciation and were in the prime of their youth, whereas those who came in contact with Holy Mother were common people. Later, those devotees who saw Holy Mother, and Her disciples who later became monks, were asked about their impression about the Holy Mother. Most of them said that they could not find anything spectacular in Holy Mother, but Her love was something special and that love far exceeded the love of one’s parents.

Now, how is one’s parents’ love different from the Universal love of Holy Mother? Firstly, love of one’s parents is conditioned by time, space and condition. But Holy Mother’s love was not like that. It is infinite and eternal. Another difference between the Holy Mother and an ordinary Mother is, an ordinary Mother thinks about the well-being of Her child in this world, whereas Holy Mother’s love and concern for Her child had greater dimensions. Holy Mother had concern about the life in this world and the life beyond of Her children.

Another difference is, in an ordinary mother, her love would be more exhibited towards that child who is good natured, obedient and well-established, whereas Holy Mother never discriminated among Her children like that. Her love was equal towards all of them.

Next, Holy Mother’s way of rectifying Her children was so unique! If anybody would point out any defect in any of Her children, she would rather show some good side in the character of that child and point it out.

Most of us expect that others should love us in spite of our defects, but this happens only rarely. But Holy Mother was exceptional. In spite of the defects and shortcomings of those who came to Her, Her love did not diminish. So, through love, she could correct a person, instead of pointing out his or her defects.

In Holy Mother’s life, we see that even if she had to do the same work from dawn to dusk, every day in Her life, she could do that with a lot of love and devotion. But in our case, we feel a kind of monotony, drudgery in doing the same work day after day.

Two monks, who had served Her as attendants, were asked about what the speciality of Holy Mother was. One of them answered, there was no trace of Ego in Holy Mother. Another monk said, she was desireless. There was no desire in Her. Then generally the householders complain that they have so much of work and responsibilities, they don’t get time for meditation and spiritual practices. But Holy Mother’s life shows that even though she was extremely busy in doing household work, looking after Her relatives, taking care of the devotees, imparting initiation, yet she could do meditation day after day.

A concrete example of egolessness in Her character can be understood in this way: An ordinary person, who has achievements in life and has many qualities, if He is given honour, usually his ego is inflated. Whereas,



Sri Ramakrishna, the greatest of all incarnations, Himself worshipped Her as Shodashi at Dakshineswar and offered the fruits of His worship at His feet; She got the highest honour by receiving His worship; yet, there was no trace of ego in Her. She could easily digest that. I should say that the householders will be benefited if they go through the life of Holy Mother, especially the ladies.

Now, let us talk about some of the teachings of Holy Mother.

You should do work no doubt. Work saves the mind from getting astray. But then, prayer and meditation also are necessary. You must sit for meditation at least once in the morning and once in the evening. That will be like the helm of a boat. When one sits in meditation in the evening, there is self-examination in respect to the works done in course of the day.

There are three points:

1. You must work,
2. You must sit for meditation,
3. You must do introspection.

Why should we work? Because without work, we cannot control our minds. The mind we know, is so restless. When we work, then the mind will be partly controlled by focussing on work, otherwise, the mind will be wandering here and there.

Secondly because of work, we become aware of the negative traits of our character. Anger, jealousy etc. are lurking inside our minds. Work makes us aware of those. Then, when we become aware, we can rectify them. Then Holy Mother recommends meditation. Meditation helps us to control our mind, purify our mind, concentrate our mind. When our mind becomes controlled and purified, with that mind we can learn things better, our relationships too becomes better. Through meditation and concentration, we can control our ego and as you know, ego is the greatest problem in our relationships. Then with a concentrated mind, our work will become better, mistakes will be lesser. Then, with the help of meditation, our love for God will grow and we shall enjoy peace of mind.

Then Holy Mother also asks us to meditate twice. Why twice? Why not once? The morning meditation helps to make our mind calm. That calmness will continue throughout the day. So, if we meditate in the morning, the effect will continue during the day. If you observe, in the morning our mind is *sattvik*, during the day it is *rajasik* and in the evening and at night, it is *tamasik*. As the Sun becomes stronger during the day, the *rajas* element also awakens. We start becoming active and dynamic. If we meditate in the morning, it will help to control our *rajas*. The evening meditation is more important than the morning meditation. Why? Because our desires become more pre-dominant in the evening. Our idleness, desires for worldly enjoyments grow in the evening or night. *Tamas* increases in the evening. How to control *tamas*, which grows in the evening? By meditating in the evening, we can clean the dirt, which has accumulated during the daytime. Just as, after a whole day's work outside, when we come back home, we clean our face, rinse our mouth, etc. in the same way, in our mind also, some dirt accumulates, and we must clean it. Secondly, self-examination, which Holy Mother emphasises. Evening meditation gives us a chance to analyse, if we have hurt a person or not, whether we have told a lie, whether we have said something unethical. This self-analysis can be done if we sit for meditation in the evening. Thirdly, evening meditation will help check the rise of tamasic propensities at night.

# Swami Medhasananda-ji's Australian trip - A Report

(from 8th to 16th January, 2024)

Some dreams are too good to be true. Pujyapad Swami Medhasananda ji Maharaj's visit to our home in Melbourne, Australia is one such lofty dream, which we dreamt. Incidentally, we became close to the Vedanta Society of Japan and Maharaj during our stay in Japan until we moved to Australia Years before one fine afternoon, while talking to Maharaj-ji on the phone from Melbourne, I bravely invited him to Melbourne, with the belief in our hearts that we will successfully overcome every obstacle put on our path and make this trip possible, Sri Thakur willing. However, years rolled on since that afternoon and pandemic and other calamities followed one after another. Finally, in November 2023, I reminded Maharaj ji of the conversation we had a long time ago, and by the grace of Sri Thakur, Maharaj seemed interested in this proposed trip. We immediately latched on to the idea and applied for his visa. Next came the last obstacle, which is a medical test madatory for the Australian visa. A few days later Maharaj ji had let us know that the medical test went smoothly. We were overjoyed at the thought of our dream coming true.

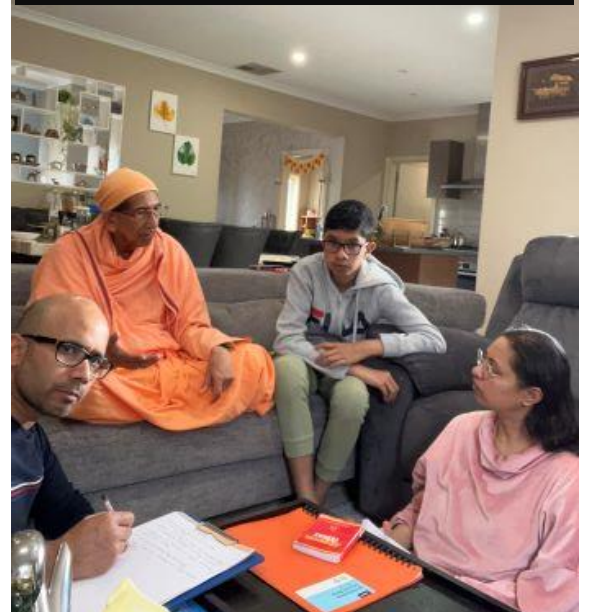


Maharaj with Kangaroos.

Finally the day came when Maharaj ji arrived in Melbourne Airport in the morning of 9<sup>th</sup> January. We still remember Maharaj ji stepped out of the car in our driveway. It was so surreal that we had to pinch ourselves to remind ourselves that we are not dreaming. May be that memory will be with us for ever.

From the start we were very concerned about taking care of Maharaj ji in every way. But within a day or two Maharaj ji gracefully adjusted himself to our life at home. Maharaj ji graced our Puja room afterwards and went on to settle for the daily routine. Usually, the day started with Maharaj ji waking up in the wee hours and would continue with his daily morning prayers in our puja room. This is to be followed by breakfast, morning chanting, reading form the Bhagavad Gita with occasional explanations followed by a brisk walk with our family members in the locality. Our breakfast time was so much fun, with Maharaj ji telling stories, teaching us a few breakfast recipes and setting up our day's routine. Lunches were usually simple with rice accompanied by a few simple curries of seasonal vegetables. Among them, raw papaya curry was Maharaj ji's favourite. Dinners were even simpler with soups and cottage cheese.

Maharaj explaining the Bhagavad Gita at the residence of Sarbari and Arun Gayen, his hosts in Australia



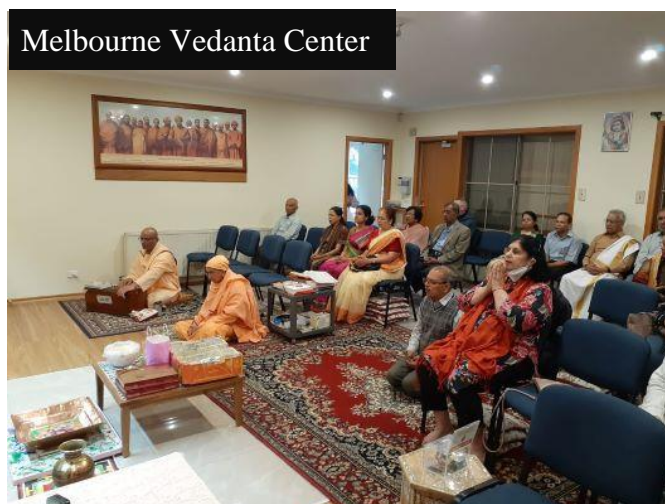
Day two started as usual. In the early afternoon, we visited the Vedanta centre in Melbourne located in Ringwood. Maharaj seemed very pleased to meet our resident monk Swami Sunisthananada ji, who is ever so kind to the devotees and welcomes everyone with his vibrant charming smile. He also visited a local Hindu Temple. That evening went in a bit of hurry and in preparation of Maharaj ji's Sydney trip the following day. Sydney is another city in Australia, 1.5 hours from Melbourne by air. It hosts one of Australia's oldest Vedanta centre, which is headed by the Revered Swami Sridharananda-ji Maharaj, a very senior monk of the Ramakrishna Mission. As Maharaj ji's Sydney trip was announced, Swami Manyananda ji maharaj from Adelaide center also joined in welcoming him at the Sydney centre.



Maharaj ji, accompanied by Arun, my husband, left for Sydney the next day in the morning by taking a local flight and reached Sydney past lunch time. The monks at the Sydney centre, including Swami Manyananda-ji from the Adelaide branch of the Sydney centre, who happened to be present at that time, also joined in welcoming him at the Sydney centre. They were overjoyed to receive Medhasananda-ji and spent some well appreciated time in his company. Maharaj ji also visited Swami Sridharananda ji Maharaj ji in the care/hospital where the senior monk was recovering from a recent health related issue. Revered Sridharanandaji was visibly pleased with Maharaj-ji's visit to him and blessed him. By the way, he remembered Maharaj ji's previous Australia trip in 2007 which the Sydney Ashram sponsored. Maharaj ji's Sydney trip was filled with chatting and laughter with other monks, with whom he was uniting after a long time. Maharaj ji returned from Sydney the day after, feeling deeply satisfied and fulfilled.



Once the Sydney trip was over, it was time for us to enjoy Maharaj ji's company, uninterrupted. Maharaj ji settled down quickly in our small abode much to our delight, most graciously ignoring all our shortcomings. While we were unhappy that we could not arrange long trips to show him more tourist destinations, on his part Maharaj did not show much interest in such sightseeing and seemed quite happy taking brisk walks in our neighbourhood, sometimes with us and a few times all by himself or along with my son. Moreover, he enjoyed these walks and local wildlife so much, that he insisted on taking more than one walk a day. Some of the photos taken were during these walks, which will be etched in our memory for a lifetime.



Maharaj ji's next program was arranged by the Vedanta sub-centre at Melbourne. Maharaj-ji gave a talk on the Vedanta Movement in Japan before the devotees gathered in the shrine on a Saturday evening followed by some prasad as dinner. Maharaj ji enchanted the local devotees with his short, crisp and enjoyable talk and everyone felt blessed by his graceful presence. In the Melbourne centre, Maharaj ji got to meet Swami Atmeshananda-ji of the Brisbane sub-centre of the Sydney Ashram, whom he knew since the latter's joining the Ramakrishna Mission at a very tender age. It is these meetings, which filled him with extraordinary joy. Later on, remembering that day, he told us, "We, the three monks, chatted non-stop from morning 11:30 to 4:30 in the afternoon!" One who knows Maharaj ji, can easily understand what significance that statement has!



While we were immersing ourselves in the bliss of Maharaj-ji's company, time stuck us hard and we approached the last night of his present trip. Maharaj ji is leaving for Tokyo the following morning! Most of the evening went as per our daily schedule and we retired a little early as we were required to leave early for the airport the following day. Before we could realise, we found ourselves offering goodbye pranam to Maharaj ji at Melbourne airport. Our hearts cried silently. We wished there was a way to keep him longer. We were left waving at the saffron silhouette in the middle of a busy airport passageway, praying to Sri Sri Thakur, Sri Sri Ma and Swamiji that we get many more chances like the present one in our lifetime to receive Revered Swami Medhasananda-ji Maharaj at our home.

(Report prepared by Mrs. Sarbari Ray whose family hosted this trip.)

• Thought of the Month •

Without forming a connection with all the temporary things which are coming and going, be situated in your real Self. When you start getting joy from these temporary things, then you get attached to these temporary things. After getting attached to these temporary things, you start exerting to purify your mind and think that this is the right thing to do - this is the confusion, this is the shortcoming. And even after exerting when you do not succeed, you become disheartened and say with despair, brother, this is beyond me. Why do you not succeed? Because you have caught hold of and attached yourself to these temporary things. If you do not get attracted towards and associate with these temporary things, your Self is ever present, always there.

- Swami Ramsukhdas

# Swami Baneshananda's Trip to Japan

Swami Baneshanandaji, head of the Mission's German Centre in Berlin, visited Japan including our centre for the first time from 25th of January through 30th January and left for the Philippines on the 31st. During his stay here he gave a short talk on the Vedanta Society in Germany and visited some sightseeing places. His sojourn made this centre's residing monks and the devotees, some of whom he knew pretty well when they had visited India, quite happy.



• Story to Remember •

## First Meeting with Swami Brahmananda

Swami Brahmanandaji used to live sometimes in the Bagbazar quarter of Calcutta. Doctor Pratap Chandra Majumdar, my grandfather who, as a physician, had treated Sri Ramakrishna during his last illness of cancer had, in the course of his visits, come to know the illustrious disciple quite well. He suggested I accompany him to Swami Brahmananda, ‘a mighty saint.’ I was overjoyed as I had read all that there was to be read about Swami Brahmananda whom Sri Ramakrishna used to style his spiritual son.

As we mounted the steps, the fragrant scent of incense filled me with an exaltation which I attributed to the presence of one of the greatest yogis of modern India, a yogi whom Sri Ramakrishna used to describe by the term *nityasiddha*. As we entered the living room of Swami Brahmananda, the great yogi turned and greeted us with a simple smile.

‘O Pratap Babu!’ he exclaimed. ‘This is, indeed, delightful!’

The two old friends talked on for a while in great joy, after which I was brought forward and duly presented. I was aquiver with ecstasy. My grandfather said that I could sing.

‘You sing, my boy? Why, that is very nice! Won’t you sing something to us? A song about the Mother, I mean. Do you know any?’

I was overjoyed and complied readily. I chose a song of the great devotee Kamalakanta—‘*Majlo Amar Man Bhramara*’—a song Sri Ramakrishna used to love. As I sang, his face became transfigured, almost self-luminous. Then he lost outward consciousness and passed into samadhi. When I paused at the end of my song, peace had descended into me—a deep peace. My grandfather, too, was moved.

The great yogi sat, a statuesque figure, hardly breathing, a beatific smile on his face. We waited in silence till he came back to normal consciousness. Then he looked intently at me in silence. Then, turning his face toward me: ‘Come my boy—come nearer.’

I rested my brow on his feet as tears of joy and gratitude flowed out. He stroked my head gently; the touch of his palm soothed my entire being.

‘Won’t you—won’t you give me some—some advice?’ I faltered, wistfully.

He held my eyes for a few seconds; a gentle smile trembled on his lips.

‘Only one thing, Remember—always. That is what Thakur used to tell us so often: *smaran manana*—to remember constantly—that is the essence of yoga. And, remember his Grace, Thakur’s—and keep reminding yourself: “I have received His Grace: I must be worthy of it.” And then—all will be well.’

These were the only words of advice he gave me and they were etched forever in my heart.

(adapted from <https://vivekavani.com/dilip-kumar-roy-and-swami-brahmananda/>)

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