



MARCH 2023 -VOLUME 21 NUMBER 03

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN



Thus Spake

Only through work can one remove the bondage of work. Total detachment comes later. One should not be without work even for a moment. Work helps one to fend off idle thoughts.

- Sarada Devi

Condemn none: if you can stretch out a helping hand, do so. If you cannot, fold your hands, bless your brothers, and let them go their own way.

- Swami Vivekananda

In this Issue:

- Thus Spake page 01
- Monthly Program Schedule page 02
- Swami Brahmananda – His Life and Teachings by Swami Divyanathananda page 03
- Swami Brahmananda by Swami Medhasananda... .. page 07
- Some Photos from Sri Ramakrishna’s Birthday Celebrations page 11
- Story to Remember page 14

Message Regarding Monthly Programmes for April 2023

Although COVID restrictions imposed by the Japanese government with the recent wave of the Omicron variant have been partially lifted, many precautions will remain in place.

Vedanta Society of Japan continues to observe social distancing, mask wearing, and avoid crowding in programme areas. Attendance to the Zushi Monthly Retreat and participation in other programs remains space limited, so please contact us if you wish to attend either of these programmes.

*Swami Medhasananda, President
Vedanta Society of Japan*

APRIL 2023

Calendar of Programmes

1st (Sat) April

Bhagavad Gita Study Class at the Indian Embassy

10:30 ~ 12:00 (In Japanese only)

Video uploaded later

4th (Tue) April

Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna Study Class

14:00 ~ 16:00 (in Japanese only), Zoom

12th (Wed) April

Weekly Upanishad Study Class

8:30 ~ 9:30 (in Japanese only), Zoom

16th (Sun) April

Monthly Retreat at Zushi

10:30 ~ 16:30

Bilingual Live Streaming

Speaker: Swami Divyanathananda

22nd (Sat) April

Bhagavad Gita Study Class in Osaka

14:30 ~ 16:30 (in Japanese only)

Contact: gita.benkyoukai.kansai@gmail.com

26th (Wed) April

Weekly Upanishad Study Class

8:30 ~ 9:30 (in Japanese only), Zoom

29th (Sat) April

Akhand Japam

5:00 ~ 20:30

Contact: Vedanta.karmayoga@gmail.com

Swami Brahmananda - His life and teachings

Discourse by Swami Divyanathananda on 19th February 2023

Swami Vivekananda, the great prophet and apostle of Sri Ramakrishna played a prominent role in spreading the life-giving message of his Master throughout the world. He had come to spread Advaita Vedanta to mankind. Swami Aseshananda, a disciple of Holy Mother who later became the Minister In-charge of the Vedanta Society of Portland, said that Swami Vivekananda can be compared to Peter, about whom Christ said, 'On this rock I shall build my church'. Swami Brahmananda, on the other hand, had come to spread the religion of love and bhakti in our world.

Sri Ramakrishna had once prayed to the divine Mother, 'Mother! give me a child, who has sincere love for God, for I am tired of talking to worldly people day and night'. After that, one day, he had a vision of the Divine Mother putting a small baby on his lap. Later, when he saw Rakhhal (the pre monastic name of Swami Brahmananda) for the first time, he at once recognised him as the same child he had seen in his vision. Rakhhal used to behave with Sri Ramakrishna as if he was his real child. Suddenly he would come running from somewhere and jump onto Sri Ramakrishna's lap. Sri Ramakrishna also would look on him as his own child. If for some reason Rakhhal would be a little unwell, the Master would be greatly worried and would express his concern to the devotees.

Sri Ramakrishna had inner insight about every person. He once said, Rakhhal could run a kingdom. On hearing this, Swamiji announced to the brothers, 'Let us call him Raja' and so later he popularly came to be called 'Raja Maharaj'. During Swamiji's lifetime, after founding the Ramakrishna Mission he handed over its leadership to Rakhhal Maharaj who gave shape to the Order's activities till his last day.

Swamiji wanted a land to be purchased near the Ganges and he delegated this task to Brahmanandaji. It was not an easy job, but Maharaj dedicated himself to this task. The present land of Belur Math, before it was purchased, had a lot of legal complications and Maharaj had to consult lawyers and attorneys for settling these matters. Every morning, after taking a light breakfast, he would go to Calcutta to consult lawyers and other known persons and often he would come back late. Sometimes he would be very late for lunch and sometimes he would even miss his lunch and remain hungry. But nobody ever saw him grumbling for this. He bore all this happily just for the sake of his brother monk, Swami Vivekananda. When at last the land was procured and the legal complications were settled, Swamiji and the other brother disciples were extremely happy.

Another very difficult and strenuous work which Maharaj had to get involved with was to fight the case against the Bally Municipality. The Municipality felt that the Belur Math was a garden house and so they levied a tax against it. Though finally Belur Math won the case, it took one year for that. Building houses, acquiring land, looking after construction related works, maintaining accounts etc. were completely against Swami Brahmananda's nature, but just for the sake of Swamiji and his other brother monks he took responsibility of these types of works.

Maharaj never questioned any idea that Swamiji introduced into the Order, rather he completely identified himself with Swamiji's thoughts. Swamiji also had so much faith in Maharaj that once he remarked that all others may leave him, but Maharaj would never do so. It is on this faith and loyalty that the Order is based.

Maharaj always showed his loving concern for the novices and monks who left their hearth and home to realise God. He not only looked after whether they were regularly doing spiritual practices, but also that they took nutritious food. In those days, due to a paucity of funds, food for the monks was usually not sufficient. In Bengal, fish being a staple food, provides the much-needed proteins for the body. Once a devotee brought a large quantity of fish and after it was cooked, Maharaj asked to serve the novices and monks in abundance. However, there was a swami who was a vegetarian and did not like monks taking fish, so he would criticize when fish was served. That day also the same thing happened. When this was brought to Maharaj's notice, he became very stern and said, "This is not a monastery of the Vaishnavas, so please don't say anything when monks take fish".

He would stress on perfection even in small acts. Because the depth of a person can be judged by the way he does small acts. For it is with the same mind that we work and we meditate. If our daily work is haphazard, our meditation too will not be deep and regular. Maharaj was keen that the novices build up their inner lives. He wouldn't mind if anybody made a mistake in a difficult and troublesome task but would become serious if somebody was seen to be careless in small and not so important tasks. While plucking flowers, if anybody was seen to carelessly cut a portion of the branch too, Maharaj would take him to task. One day, He asked the novices and young monks to peel one potato each and said, by seeing the peeled potato I shall tell you how well you meditate. Among the peeled potatoes, pointing to one particular monk (Swami Shuddhananda), he said, this one meditates well.

Swami Brahmanandaji used to stress on regularly doing Japa-Dhyana. For without Japa-Dhyana monastic life becomes dry. Moreover together with work if meditation is not done, then it becomes impossible to control the lower desires like anger, lust, etc. Also, without regular meditation, the work that we do instead of becoming yoga, will result in increase of one's ego, resulting in downfall of the spiritual aspirant. During his stay at Belur Math, Maharaj would wake up the novices by 4 am. After meditating for a couple of hours, devotional songs and chanting of selected hymns would follow. An atmosphere would soon be created where their minds would be raised to a higher level because of regular spiritual practices. He would inspire the novices and other monks to dive deep in meditation.



In a spiritual organisation when spirituality decreases, differences in opinion among members grow and these lead to rifts among them. This may happen when spiritual practices are not done diligently by the members. An illustration will make this point clear. A band of young men, inspired by Swamiji's clarion call of serving Shiva in human beings, started nursing the sick themselves. Thus, the Varanasi Home of Service came into being. Their prime focus was serving others and Japa, Dhyana, and Swadhyaya (study of scriptures) were left to one's personal discretion. Once there was some difference in opinion among some of these workers of the Sevashrama (Home of service) in Varanasi. Swami Saradananda and Turiyananda Maharaj tried their best but were not able to resolve the problem. They requested Swami Brahmanandaji to come to Varanasi and help sort out the matter. Maharaj came and surprisingly, he did not summon the clashing parties for a discussion. He just asked everybody to do meditation along with himself daily. All followed his advice and in a few days the situation changed. They understood the cause of the discord and settled it among themselves. Some of those young men, who had not thought of becoming monks, but rather wanted to render their service in plain clothes, now took sannyasa from Swami Brahmananda.

During the Presidentship of Raja Maharaj, he made a long trip to the South India and during that time he initiated several spiritual seekers. Many new centres too were affiliated to the Mission which helped in the expansion of its activities and the spread of Sri Ramakrishna's message.

During his tenure as the President, many new Ashramas were getting affiliated with the Ramakrishna Mission in different parts of India. For growth and development of the newly built Ashramas he would always insist that a wide land be taken, and the place should be full of plants and flowers. He would bring plants from one part of India and plant them in another part. This paved the way for cross cultural exchange. He had brought *nagalingam* seeds from Bangalore to Belur Math. Kankhal Ashrama is famous for its sweet mangos. This is the result of efforts of Maharaj, for there were no good mango plants earlier, he had brought them from another part of India and himself took interest in gardening there. Similarly, he brought a particular variety of jackfruit from Dhaka (Bangladesh) to Belur Math. He would also encourage the devotees who lived near the Ashrams to help in the development of the Ashrams.

During his visit to South India, he heard the *Ramnama Sankirtanam*. He was so much impressed that he introduced this in the Belur Math and encouraged monks and novices to participate. Slowly it was introduced in other centres in India. Even now, it is sung on Ekadashi days in almost all centres of India.

So what Swami Vivekananda gave through lectures, Swami Brahmananda helped to put into reality and give a concrete form. He was instrumental in consolidating the ideas of the Mission which Swamiji dreamt of.

Once a senior monk came to him and said, Maharaj, we want to add some new rules for the monastery. Immediately, Maharaj said, 'instead of adding new rules, please add some more love, for it is love which binds the members of the monastic order'.

Maharaj was President of the mission for 22 long years. Till now he has been the longest serving President of the Order. The brother disciples had so much faith in his judgment that Swami Saradananda once remarked, 'you may judge our decision about a particular matter according to logic and reasoning, but never judge Maharaj's decision. Because he keeps constant communion with Sri Ramakrishna and all his decisions are directly passed from Sri Ramakrishna'.

Maharaj once compiled the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and published it in a book form entitled 'Words of the Master'. Sri Ramakrishna appeared before him one day and corrected one particular teaching as not told by him.

The heart of a realised soul expands so much that he finds happiness in the well-being of others. In fact when one's small 'I' merges into the bigger 'I', then he desires to live for the welfare of others. Once it happened that among his attendants one was very unruly and it was decided by the Math authorities that this attendant be expelled from the Math. Swami Saradananda was the Secretary. Upon hearing their decision, Maharaj went to him and said, 'I heard that you all have decided to expel so and so from the Math. I have decided to relinquish the post of the President and stay with him somewhere, because once I have taken somebody's responsibility, I cannot leave him, I shall rather leave the Math.' Upon hearing this from Maharaj, Swami Saradananda immediately changed his decision.

He was also a redeemer for the fallen. Sometimes, because of the pressures to earn a livelihood, a person is forced to choose an occupation which is immoral. But his heart cries to get out from these unpleasant situations and looks for somebody who can lift him up. The following reminiscences of Tarasundari, an actress of theatre bears testimony of the above fact:

“I did not have any peace in my heart. Alone, I went from one pilgrimage to another, in search of peace, but there was a burning feeling in my heart. One day, accompanied with Binodini, I went to see Swami Brahmanandaji. He received us with a lot of love and compassion, just like a loving father, and expressed concern for both of us. It was afternoon, he arranged for our meal. He asked, ‘why don’t you come here more often?’. I replied, ‘Out of shame and fear, for we are actresses and not looked with respect by society’.(In those days actresses were picked up from public women). Maharaj removed all fear and hesitation from our minds, and said, ‘This is Thakur’s place. Thakur had incarnated to lift especially the fallen’. After a few days, Maharaj went to see the play ‘Ramanuja’, in which I was acting. Maharaj blessed me. Then when Maharaj was in Bhubaneswar, I had also happened to visit Puri and knowing that he was there in Bhubaneswar, went to see him. He was so happy to see me and asked me to have food everyday there. I found a loving father in Him. Because in the world, everybody is usually guided by self-interest. Maharaj, gauging the condition of my mind, advised me to start chanting the name of Thakur and recounted his own experience, how during his youth his mind was also restless and how repeating the Lord’s name, the mind would become calm. I found solace in his words and for the time being it helped to remove the burning feeling from my heart and I decided to follow his advice”.

Maharaj could not ignore those who wanted to serve him with real love and genuine feelings in their mind. One day Basiswar Sen brought a big fish from Bishnupur. The attendant in the kitchen told him, ‘Please take it away it won’t be useful. Another devotee has sent a huge quantity of fish, and we have already distributed some from that portion. Naturally, he felt sad for his effort has gone in vain. However, he went to Maharaj. On seeing him, Maharaj asked him, “Boshi, what have you brought for me from Bishnupur?” Boshi, said, “Maharaj, I had brought a large fish, but I was told that it won’t be needed”. On hearing this, Maharaj went to the kitchen and asked the attendants to clean and it cook the fish, and serve it to him.

These are but a few anecdotes from the life of Swami Brahmanandaji Maharaj. They show, how deep was his inner life and how broad was his heart. There is a verse in the Bhagavad Gita.

सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि |

ईक्षते योगयुक्तात्मा सर्वत्र समदर्शनः || 6.29||

*sarva-bhūta-stham ātmānam sarva-bhūtāni chātmani
īkṣhate yoga-yuktātmā sarvatra sama-darśhanaḥ*

The true yogis, uniting their consciousness with God, see with an equal eye, all living beings in God and God in all living beings.

The life of Swami Brahmananda is a proof of the above verse. He dedicated himself especially for building up the inner life of monastic members of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, for they will carry the liberating message of Sri Ramakrishna to different parts of the world. He infused devotion in the hearts of devotees so that they can move forward in their spiritual lives. He was truly the ‘Manasa Putra’ (human child) of Sri Ramakrishna.

Swami Brahmananda

Discourse by Swami Medhasananda on 19th February 2023 (Afternoon Session)

Most of the times, Swami Brahmananda talked about mundane and secular things to the devotees and only on rare occasions would he give any spiritual discourse to them. The reason is that only when one is really thirsty that he will drink and relish water, otherwise, if someone isn't thirsty, one will not even drink water. The same holds good in case of spiritual instruction too. Unless one has become serious to know the truth, giving spiritual instructions will be of no avail. There are many who listen to spiritual discourses, but they don't take them seriously to actually perform spiritual practices. So, Brahmanandaji was interested to talk about spiritual life only to serious aspirants. This was his approach. He would not just 'scatter pearls before the swine', as they are not capable of understanding their value.

Not only this, he was a lover of fun also. He would cut lot of jokes. He would love to tease others - sometimes his brother disciples, and sometimes the devotees also. His hobby was to catch fish and play cards. This is generally against the ways and manners of a monk, but he would do those.

Sometimes the devotees would get confused, why a monk of his stature, the President of Ramakrishna Math and Mission is indulging in such things? What is the purpose? For a spiritual person would naturally talk of spiritual things, or do Japa, meditation, etc. That is the general image of a saint, or a great monk. The answer is, his mind would always be soaring in a very high plane, although not that extent as Sri Ramakrishna, but this also was the state of his mind. His normal plane of consciousness was God. Just as a compass always points to the north. So, if he would always be in God consciousness, how could he teach others? So, to forcibly bring his mind down from that plane, he would talk of mundane things, and then he could give teachings to others so as to free them from the clutches of Maya. So, playing of cards, catching fish, cutting jokes and teasing others - the purpose of all those was to bring the mind from the

consciousness of God to a lower plane, so that he could give instructions about spiritual life to others and guide them to the path of peace and enlightenment. Let me give an illustration:

Once a deputy magistrate from Midnapore, a district of Bengal, hearing about Swami Brahmananda, came to Belur Math for seeking guidance about spiritual life and if possible to get initiated. Near the entrance of Belur Math, there was a pond. As this person entered the Math, he found a monk catching fish in the pond. It appeared little strange to him, however he went to the main monastery and asked a monk (Swami Premananda) about Swami Brahmananda. Premanandaji knew that at that time Maharaj was catching fish, but didn't want to disclose this to the gentleman, so he kept quiet. Out of some premonition, the gentleman asked, I saw one monk catching fish in the pond while entering Belur Math, is he Swami Brahmananda? Premanandaji said yes. The person was quite shocked and he declared, 'I am not going to take initiation from a monk who catches fish!'



When Brahmanandaji returned to his room after some time, Premanandaji narrated the entire incident to him in a somewhat complaining tone. Brahmanandaji calmly said to Premanandaji, 'Baburam da (pre-monastic name of Swami Premananda), please don't worry. By Thakur's grace, many such officers will come to the Math.'

After around one week, the same officer returned and met Premanandaji and requested him, 'Sir, can you help me meet Swami Brahmanandaji?' Premanandaji was surprised and asked, 'Why? When you visited the last time, you angrily said that you won't take initiation from a swami who loves to catch fish and left. So, why do you want to meet him now?' The officer confided that after leaving Belur Math that day, he could not forget the face of Swami Brahmanandaji even for a moment. And that made his mind so restless that he could not concentrate on his work.

So Premanandaji arranged for his meeting with Swami Brahmananda, and later he took initiation from Maharaj. And for his *guru-dakshina* to Maharaj, he presented Maharaj one costly fishing rod! That fishing rod is still preserved in the bedroom of Swami Brahmananda, which is located above his temple in Belur Math.

Another illustration: Swami Brahmananda was staying at the Balamandir, the house of Balamandir Bose, one of the closest householder devotees of Sri Ramakrishna. Maharaj loved to live there. A separate room was allocated for him, which was very well-furnished, like a very rich man's room. Once, a distinguished person came to meet Maharaj. He saw Maharaj was taking a nap in that room. He, entering the room being unnoticed, was rather disappointed, for he had expected the spiritual son of Sri Ramakrishna would be full of renunciation and would be living in a more austere environment. But he saw the opposite. However, the man didn't disclose his inner thoughts and waited outside the room for a meeting with Maharaj. After some time, he was allowed to meet Maharaj. After the meeting was over, while he was returning, he said, 'I was going to make the greatest blunder of my life. The biggest problem of my life has been solved by Swami Brahmanandaji when I talked to him. Seeing him surrounded with costly furniture, I had initially misunderstood him and had I left that place then, I would have missed this wonderful opportunity. These illustrations are given to give one an idea that one could easily misunderstand Maharaj by seeing him externally.'

Now I shall tell you about his spiritual stature. There would be trustee meetings at Belur Math. (Trustees are those who run the administration of Ramakrishna Math). Because he was the President, he was expected to be present in those meetings. Often he would decline to attend those meetings after being requested to be present and the dates had to be deferred again and again. Swami Saradananda was the General Secretary and Suddhanandaji the Assistant Secretary. They would repeatedly request him to attend those meetings, but he would often decline.

There were also important documents which needed his signature, since he was the President. So, either Saradananda or Suddhananda would request him to sign these documents. Signing a document is not at all a difficult task. But Brahmanandaji would try to defer, giving some reason or the other. However, one day, they pressed him, saying, 'Maharaj, you must sign today.' Maharaj anyway took the pen and was trying to sign, then he said, 'I can't remember the spelling of my name, please bring the document another day.'

Then they asked him, what was the reason for this: sometimes he is deferring the meeting, it is getting postponed again and again, sometimes he would refuse signing a document. Why it is so? Then Maharaj divulged the reason, saying, 'You see, to me the world appears like a shadow. It is

not real. That is why, all these businesses you bring to me, I cannot attend to, because I can't put my mind to them.' So, one can well understand, at what height his mind used to dwell!

We have read in the life of Sri Ramakrishna that just by touching somebody he could awaken the spiritual consciousness in them. And sometimes, even not touching, but just by wishing that 'let the spiritual consciousness be awakened in this person' the result would be the same. Swami Brahmanandaji Maharaj also could do this. An illustration will show this. In those days, Maharaj was staying in Bhubaneswar. A young man, calm and quiet, would visit the Math and read books in the library. Once Brahmananda came out from his room and called this boy and asked him to sit facing him. After being seated, Maharaj touched him. The moment he touched the boy, the boy went into deep samadhi. Then after he came down to normal consciousness, he left Bhubaneswar Math and never came back and nobody came to know what happened to him. This example shows how spiritual consciousness had been awakened suddenly in somebody. So sometimes without any self-effort, without any previous preparation, just by sheer grace of a highly evolved soul, examples of latent spiritual power in somebody getting uplifted are there. A person like Brahmanandaji could see and understand, whose spiritual consciousness was ready to be bloomed, and he acted accordingly.

There are reminiscences of Swami Brahmananda by Swami Vijayananda, who was a disciple of Brahmanandaji Maharaj. He was the founder of Vedanta Society of Argentina, and he lived there for many years. He explained the phenomenon of supernatural powers. We all hear about supernatural powers, but how does it occur? He said, if one can control the microcosm, then one will be able to control the macrocosm too. If one can control his own mind, then he can control the mind of others also. Because it is the same entity which resides in all. That is the explanation of supernatural power. The same prakriti, which resides in a human being in micro level, exists in all beings in the world at the macro level. That which constitutes one atom, constitutes the entire Universe, as the entire Universe is made up of the same atoms.

We are generally under the control of nature, but when a man controls his mind, nature follows him. This is the explanation of supernatural power. Now, it will not be out of place to mention that not only can a realised person have supernatural powers, but even a person who has advanced sufficiently in spiritual life can have these powers. But the fact is, to use the supernatural power before realising God is not safe, and hence not advised. Because, it enhances one's ego and it becomes an obstacle to one's spiritual development. But after one has achieved God realisation, the ego has dissolved in the Cosmic I, and then these supernatural powers can be used for others' welfare.

Swami Vijnanananda was another brother disciple of Swami Brahmanandaji. In his pre-monastic life, he was an engineer and it is he, who had designed the huge temple of Sri Ramakrishna in Belur Math, under the guidance and ideas given by Swami Vivekananda. And long after Swamiji had left his mortal body, the present Main Temple of Belur Math was constructed by Martin and Burn Co. under his supervision. Being a man of science, he had a rationalistic attitude of mind, at the same time he had risen to great spiritual heights.

One day, a discussion started between Swami Vijnanananda and Swami Brahmananda about supernatural powers. While Swami Brahmanandaji repeatedly emphasized that supernatural powers exist, Vijnanananda emphatically said, 'No, I don't believe in them! They can't be true.'

Brahmananda: 'Do you want a proof of it?'

Vijnanananda: 'Yes, I want.'

Brahmananda: 'Ok, let us bet.'

Then there was a bet over a certain sum of money. That day, it was a very sunny day, and quite hot. Swami Brahmananda said, today at 1pm, there will be rain. Vijnanananda said, on such a sunny day, when there is not even a small cloud, how can there be rain? It is impossible.

In the meantime, since Swami Vivekananda's temple was under construction, a boat carrying lime was anchored on the Ganges. Brahmananda asked a brahmachari to cover that boat with some plastic sheet. Strangely, just 10 minutes before 1pm, huge clouds gathered from somewhere one did not know, it became dark and exactly at 1 pm, it started raining. Vijnanananda came out from his room, looked at the rain, and went back to his room. Obviously, Vijnanananda was defeated and Brahmanandaji asked the bet money from him. Vijnanananda said, 'You know Maharaj, I don't have any money with me, so let me take it from you, and I shall give you the bet money.'

The important point to understand about this incident is, if one can control nature which dwells in his own body and mind, then he will be able to control the nature at the macro level also.

Let me narrate another incident. Generally, in those days, women of good families would not take part in acting in plays. Although initially men played the roles of women, it did not look natural, so Girish Chandra Ghosh, another eminent householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, thought of introducing women into acting. But since women of good character from good families would not take part into acting, so public women had to be recruited for that art. Tarasundari, whose incident was narrated in the pre-lunch session was one such actress, and she was no doubt a very talented actress. At that time, she was suffering from tremendous mental agonies.

As narrated already in the pre-lunch session, one day Tarasundari came to meet Swami Brahmananda. The attendant brahmachari first was reluctant to allow her to meet him. However, she persisted, and so the brahmachari went to inform Maharaj. Maharaj asked the brahmachari to bring her immediately before him. Naturally, the brahmachari was surprised, but he called her into Maharaj's living room. Tara came there, fell at Maharaj's feet and started shedding tears profusely, and addressing Maharaj as father she said, 'Please save me! For you know what is going in my heart. I have no peace.' Maharaj said, "My daughter, since you have addressed me as 'father' live in a way, so that you can call yourself as the daughter of Swami Brahmananda". See, how he turned her feelings into a completely different direction. Maharaj also told her many other things which gave her consolation and comfort and asked the brahmachari to bring food for them.

After some time, she went to Bhubaneswar, built a house there and did spiritual practices. Later when Brahmanandaji passed away, she came and that same brahmachari whom she had met in the initial meeting with Brahmanandaji had by the time become a monk (Swami Vijayananda), addressing him, she said, 'My dear brother, our father is now no more in his physical body, but he will always remain in our heart'. By that time, she had undergone a complete transformation in her life. Just one sentence of Raja Maharaj - "live in a way, so that you can call yourself as the daughter of Swami Brahmananda" - changed the outlook of her life and she became a devotee. A saint like Swami Brahmananda had the power to do that.

All these episodes indicate the great spiritual height of Swami Brahmananda and his tremendous power of transforming persons spiritually – hence he was aptly called 'the spiritual son of Sri Ramakrishna'.

Some Photographs from Sri Ramakrishna's Birthday Celebrations in March 2023





Nippon Vedanta Kyokai, Zushi
Sri Sri Ramakrishna Deva 188th Birthday Celebration
シュリー・シュリー・ラーマクリシュナ第 188 回生誕祭
Sunday, 19 March, 2023 Venue: Annexe Building
2023 年 3 月 19 日(日) 於アネックス

Programme

06:00 am	Mangalarati (Main shrine)	マンガラアラティ(朝拝、本館)
06:30 am	Chanting and Meditation	聖句朗唱と瞑想
10:30 am	Puja , Offering, Homa, Pushpanjali	プージャ、供物、護摩、花の奉 獻
01:00 pm	Lunch (Prasad)	昼食(プラサード)
03:00 pm	Chanting and Reading Discourse : Swami Medhasanandaj Interpreter: Ms. Yoko Sasaki Devotional Songs	聖句朗唱、聖典輪読 講話: スワミー・メダサーナンド師 通訳: 佐々木陽子氏 賛歌
04:30 pm	Special Musical Programme Sarangi : Mr. Shinsuke Nishizawa Tabla : Mr. Dinesh Dyoundi	スペシャル音楽プログラム サロード: 西沢信亮氏 タブラ: ディネシュ・ドヨウンディ 氏
05:30 pm	Tea	お茶
06:15 pm	Evening Arati, Bhajan, Meditation	夕拝、賛歌、瞑想



• Thought of the Month •

So, work hard; perform all duties; develop yourself; then come and surrender to the highest. Do a whole day's honest work, then sit and meditate; then resign yourself to God. Otherwise, that meditation has no meaning or value. Meditation at the end of a lazy day has no meaning; but the same at the end of an active day, filled with good deeds, has meaning, and is rewarding.

- Swami Ranganathananda

• Story to Remember •

Guru Nanak and the Mullah

There was a great prophet in India, Guru Nanak, born 400 years ago. Some of you have heard of the Sikhs, the fighting people. He was a follower of the Sikh religion.

One day he went to the Mohammedans' Mosque. These Mohammedans are feared in their own country, just as in a Christian country no one dare say anything against their religion. They think they have liberty to kill and criticize everybody who does not agree with them. So, this man went in, and there was a big Mosque, and the Mohammedans were standing in prayer. They stand in lines; they kneel down, stand up, and repeat certain words at the same times, and one fellow leads.

So, Guru Nanak went there, and when the mullah was saying "In the name of the most merciful and kind God, Teacher of all teachers", he began to smile.

He said, "Look at that hypocrite".

The mullah got into a passion. "Why do you smile?"

"Because you are not praying, my friend, that is why I am smiling".

"Not praying?"

"Certainly not; there is no prayer in you".

The mullah was very angry, and he went and laid a complaint before a magistrate, and said, "This heathen rascal dares to come to our mosque and smiles at us when we are praying; the only punishment is instant death, kill him".

Guru Nanak was brought before the magistrate and asked why he smiled.

"Because he was not praying".

"What was he doing?" the magistrate asked.

"I will tell you what he was doing, if you will bring him before me".

The magistrate ordered the mullah to be brought, and when he came, he said "Here is the mullah, explain why you laughed when he was praying".

Guru Nanak said, "Give the mullah a piece of the Koran [to swear on]. When he was saying Allah, Allah, he was thinking of some chicken he had left at home".

The poor mullah was confounded. He was a little more sincere than the others, and he confessed he was thinking of the chicken, and so they let the Sikh go.

"But", said the Magistrate, "Don't go to the mosque again. It is better not to go at all than to commit blasphemy there and hypocrisy. Do not go when you do not feel like praying, do not be like a hypocrite, and do not think of the chicken and say the name of the Most Merciful and Blissful God."

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