



NOVEMBER 2024 - VOLUME 22 NUMBER 11

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

Thus Spake

The Guru is like a mother, but eternal. For a mother's journey is bound by the certainty of death, as all who walk this earth must one day return to dust. Yet in the Guru, the nurturing love of a mother lives on forever. The Guru is Bhavani, the protector; the Guru is Durga, the fierce and compassionate; the Guru is, above all, the eternal mother.

— Murari Babu

Undisturbed calmness of the mind is attained by cultivating friendliness toward the happy, compassion for the unhappy, delight in the virtuous, and indifference toward the wicked.

— Maharishi Patanjali

In this Issue:

- Thus Spake page 01
- Monthly Program Schedule page 02
- Life and Message of Sri Krishna by Swami Medhasananda page 02
- Life and Teachings of Swami Adbhutananda by Swami Divyanathananda page 07
- Swami Medhasananda's visit to Vedanta Centre of Sydney page 11
- Swami Medhasananda's visit to Vedanta Centre of Brisbane page 11
- Story to Remember page 13

Monthly Program Schedule for December 2024

3rd (Tue)

Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna Study Class

14:30 ~ 16:30

(Japanese Only) (Zoom)(Video Uploaded Later)

7th (Sat)

Bhagavad Gita Study Class at the Indian Embassy

10:30 ~ 12:00

(Japanese Only) (Video Uploaded Later)

11th (Wed)

Monthly Upanishad Study Class

8:30 ~ 10:30

(Japanese Only) (Zoom) (Video Uploaded Later)

15th (Sun)

Monthly Retreat at Zushi

10:30 ~ 16:30

(Bilingual) (Livestreaming)(Video Uploaded Later)

Speaker: Swami Medhasananda

24th (Tue)

Christmas Eve Worship

19:00 ~ 21:00

(Bilingual) (Livestreaming)

*Prior reservation is necessary until 20th. Tel: 046-873-0428

Life and Message of Sri Krishna

by Swami Medhasananda

on 18th August 2024, Post Lunch Session of the Retreat of Sri Krishna's Birthday Celebration

In the Vrindavan episode in the life of Sri Krishna, we have discussed his relationship with his foster parents. In this session, we shall discuss his relationship with his cowherd friends. Krishna and his cowherd friends would take the cows for grazing and as the cows grazed, they would play amongst themselves. They had different kinds of games, like hide-and-seek, climbing trees, running etc.; and sometimes they would sit together and share the food brought

from their homes. Krishna also fully participated in all these plays and pranks. The cowherd boys were aware of his divine qualities and supernatural powers, but while interacting with him they would not always remember these. They treated him as one of their very best friends. Sometimes they would pluck some fruit from a nearby tree and tasting it themselves first, if found sufficiently sweet, would offer it to Krishna. If for a short while they missed to see Krishna, they would feel unbearable pain and all the joy from these games would become pale, and leaving their play and games, they would set themselves for finding him. There was so much love for him in their hearts. Sri Krishna also loved them like a mother, protecting them from all dangers, since it was a forest area.

Now comes his relationship with the milkmaids- the *Gopis*. This aspect of Sri Krishna's divine sport is very very special and well-known. It is not easy to understand the significance of this relationship of Krishna with the Gopis and many misunderstand it to be illicit relationship. These *gopis* were very young, most of them still teenagers and because of early marriage which existed in the society during that time, some of them were already married. Often, they would sing and dance together and spend long hours in merriment, and an outsider would consider it to be an immoral relationship. So, we have to very carefully examine the relationship of Krishna with the Gopis.

Now, let us see, how love develops between a man and a woman. This love between a man and a woman develops when they start



liking each other. Then the liking develops into strong liking, following which there is a yearning to meet and talk to each other, and finally, there is marriage. But after marriage, although the curve is for some time upwards, but one is not sure, if it will continue to rise.

But the love between God and the devotee is different. The love between God and the devotee starts in a similar way. First the devotee starts liking God, slowly, this love grows, and then the devotee likes only God among all other things. In the last stage, God becomes the centre of all his activities, all his thoughts. Then the devotee develops a strong yearning to see God. If that yearning is strong and steady, then the Lord, out of his grace, may bestow the vision of His divine form. But He doesn't grant the vision of His divine form continually. He disappears. This creates a pang of separation in the heart of the devotee, who doesn't want to lose sight of the Lord. In Sanskrit there is a term called *विरह viraha*, which means the pangs of separation. This period is very difficult for the devotee. Often it becomes unbearable for him.

Now, if somebody wants to define, who is God, what will be our answer? Let us try to analyse. Supreme beauty, Supreme sweetness, Supreme bliss, Supreme purity, Supreme love, Supreme

simplicity, Supreme compassion, and Supreme knowledge - when we combine all these, that is God. And this beauty is not for a short time. In case of human beings, when one is young, there is beauty in the face and body, but as one progresses with age, slowly that beauty wanes. When one gets a vision of God, then all human beauty turns into ash. Ravana after kidnapping Sita, had her stay in the Ashoka grove. Then Ravana tried again and again to persuade Sita to marry him. He assumed various forms, because he was a demon and had mystical powers and could assume form of others. So, someone suggested, why not assume the form of Rama when trying to persuade Sita! Ravana said, if he has to take the form of Rama then he will have to meditate on His form, and the moment he starts meditating on Rama, all other things become insignificant, including women. The company of another woman feels like ash, when one meditates on the form of Rama. So, when we meditate on our chosen deity, we should contemplate on these qualities of God: Supreme beauty, supreme love, supreme purity, supreme compassion, supreme knowledge. The Lord is the summation of all these qualities.

We were talking about *viraha*. God appears before the devotee and then disappears. This stage is the most difficult phase in the life of a devotee. After having the vision of God, the devotee can't bear the separation. Then real yearning develops. The devotee yearns only to have the vision of God. Finally, God appears, and the devotee completely merges with God. That is the culmination of the devotee's love of God. The ego of the devotee dissolves into the consciousness of God. When the river merges into the ocean, the river loses its identity and becomes one with the ocean.

All that which I have been discussing about divine love, the demonstration of this we find in the relation between Gopis and Sri Krishna. Who were the Gopis? Apparently, ordinary milkmaids. But spiritually they had achieved great heights. They were very pure souls. They had no I-consciousness. They were fully aware of the divine nature of Sri Krishna. But instead of having an awe and reverence for Him, they loved him, regarding Him as the nearest of the nearest. But it was just not mere theory, they expressed this love in action. They sacrificed everything for Sri Krishna - duty, family, husband, children, their homes and even their bashfulness. Because they regarded all these as obstacles for the supreme love of God.

For instance, when they would hear the sweet sound of Sri Krishna playing the flute, whatever work they were engaged in - nursing children, cooking for the family, serving husband, etc. - they would leave all these in their incomplete state and would rush towards the sound of Sri Krishna's flute. Sri Krishna would be a bit surprised to see them as he knew that all of them were engaged in their own respective household chores. So, as a way to test them, he would ask them the reason of their coming there and would ask them to return to their household duties. He was testing how much yearning they actually had to meet Him. The Gopis answered, 'How heartless you are! We have renounced all our family responsibilities just for your sake, and you are asking us to go back! Now, do you think, our family members will accept us? For, while coming, they forbade us to leave our chores. Now will they accept us?'

All these incidents and dialogues between Krishna and the Gopis are recorded in the Bhagavatam. Sri Krishna then allowed them to have his company, but after a short while Krishna suddenly disappeared. The Gopis were not at all prepared for this. They were

overpowered by Viraha. They were searching for Him everywhere. They asked the trees, the rivers, 'Have you seen Krishna?' In the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, we find several songs which He used to sing in front of devotees and many of those songs are songs of viraha which describe the pangs of separation of the Gopis from Krishna. Actually, Sri Krishna was hiding himself. Finally, he reappeared and said that he was testing the depth of their love for Him.

Then they all would spend time together in singing and dancing with Him, encircling him. This is called Rasalila in the Bhagavatam. Rasalila is a very important aspect of Madhurabhava. The madhurabhava reached its climax at rasalila. Rasa means, there will be many women and only one man, they would form a circle around the man and dance. Now, in secular life also, one man can dance with many women. But what is the difference with Rasalila? In this Lila, Krishna multiplied himself into many and with each Gopi, there was one form of Krishna. Can an ordinary person do that? This is one divine aspect of Sri Krishna. So, with each Gopi, one Krishna was dancing, and they were so much engrossed in the dance, that sometimes the Gopi would feel 'I am Krishna'. That means, the Gopis would lose their self-identity and would become one with Krishna. This is called Krishna-consciousness. The love that the Gopis possessed for Krishna was the highest and deepest among all the devotees. That love is incomparable.

Swami Vivekananda said, if one wants to learn how to love God, one should learn it from Radha. Radha was regarded as the foremost of the Gopis. To give an instance of the deep love of the Gopis, while they were staring at Krishna, after some time their eyes would blink, which takes just a fraction of a second. But they would not want to lose sight of Krishna for even a fraction of a second. Such was their love. They would get annoyed with the eyes for blinking!

Sri Ramakrishna said, the subtle bodies of the Gopis would always be at the feet of Sri Krishna, so that they could always guard His feet from getting hurt. Now there is one interesting episode. Sri Krishna always was appreciative of the love of Gopis, and he would say, 'I cannot repay the love which the Gopis have bestowed on me'. Naturally other devotees envied the Gopis. Once, while in Dwaraka, Sri Krishna feigned illness. And, he said, 'this illness cannot be cured by any physician. There is only one method to cure it'. Everyone was curious to know, what was the way by which Krishna would get cured. Sri Krishna said, 'if the dust of a devotee is smeared over my forehead, only then shall I get cured.' But everyone was shocked to hear that. For all want to take the dust of the feet of the Lord, how can the opposite happen? It is considered a sin to even think of smearing the dust of the devotee's feet on the head of God. Sri Krishna had many devotees, but none of them dared to do that act. The point to note here is, everyone was concerned about the consequence of the act - that they would incur sin, by smearing the dust of their own feet on the head of Krishna. Here the centre of consciousness is the devotee himself. So, the centre is not the Lord. So, no one dared to put the dust of one's feet on Krishna's head. When the news of his illness and the unusual remedy reached the Gopis, then all of them eagerly expressed their willingness to put the dust of their feet on Krishna's head. They didn't bother to think of the consequences of such a strange act, whether it will sink them into hell or lift them up to heaven.

So, from this illustration one can make out, how different was the love of the Gopis for Sri Krishna from other devotees. But Swami Vivekananda has cautioned ordinary people who haven't transcended their body consciousness and haven't sublimated their negative emotions like lust, etc., to not read those episodes of Shrimad Bhagavatam which describe the love of Gopis towards Sri Krishna, because that may result in taking the unprepared mind down to the level of temptations for fulfilment of carnal desires.

Another caution made by Sri Ramakrishna, in the practice of Madhura bhava was that, if the husband-and-wife practice Madhura bhava among themselves, then there is no problem. But if a married man takes this attitude with the wife of another man, then it will be an illicit relationship and it will cause the downfall of that person. Sri Ramakrishna cautioned his disciples not to cultivate this attitude.

What can we learn from this love between the Gopis and Sri Krishna? Swami Vivekananda said, if one wants to learn how to love God, then one should learn from Radha. When Krishna left Vrindavan, Yashoda, Krishna's foster mother became extremely sad, and hence, went to Radha to seek comfort. Radha then showed her actual form - Her Primordial energy. Chit-Shakti. She said, 'Krishna is Chidatma, and I am Chitshakti. Please ask any boon from me'. Yashoda sought a boon. What was the boon? 'You grant me the boon that I may completely devote my body, mind and speech in the service of Krishna, meditate on Krishna, and thus offering the mind to Krishna, let me always have the company of devotees and serve them. Let me always chant and sing his glories'.

Once a young monk of the Ramakrishna Mission asked a senior monk, 'why is it that my meditation is not very deep?' The senior monk replied, 'Do you really love Sri Ramakrishna? If you really love him, then your meditation will always be deep.' As Yashoda desired to devote her body, mind and speech in the service and contemplation of Krishna, if we also follow the same, we shall be able to progress spiritually, our devotion will grow, and finally we shall have the vision of the Lord.

• Thought of the Month •

Learn to work for the Lord instead of working for yourself. Know that you are worshipping the Lord through your work. If you can work with this attitude, work will not bind you; on the contrary, it will improve you in every way, physically, mentally, intellectually, morally, and spiritually. Offer yourself, body and soul, to the Lord. Give yourself entirely to him. Say to him: "I give myself, body and soul, to you, O Lord. Do with me what you will. I am your servant, ready to serve you to the best of my ability." If you can really do this, the responsibility for your spiritual well-being rests with him. But this resignation should be inspired by the right spirit and complete faith. No doubt must enter your heart; it is no use "taking the name of God to cross the river and at the same time raising your cloth to keep it dry."

- Swami Brahmananda

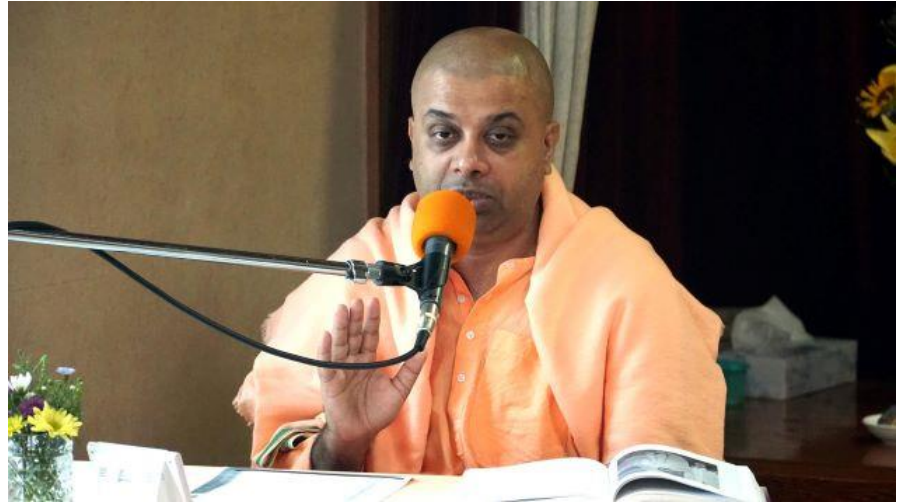
Life and teachings of Swami Adbhutananda

by Swami Divyanathananda

On 15th September at Zushi

All the monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna were gems. United they were, bound by the love of Sri Ramakrishna, yet-each was different, and all of them reflected the sublime teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. Today, we are going to contemplate on the life of Latu Maharaj, or Swami Adbhutananda.

About Latu Maharaj, Swamiji said, 'Latu is the greatest miracle of Sri Ramakrishna. Having absolutely no education, he has attained the highest wisdom simply by virtue of the Master's touch.' Swami Turiyanandaji, another monastic disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, once made a comment: 'Many of us had to cross the muddy waters of intellect before developing devotion to God. Latu jumped over it like Hanuman and crossed it'.



Latu's parents named him 'Rakhturam' - meaning, 'O Rama, be though the protector of this child'. Rama indeed, protected the boy till his last days from the snares of Maya. From Rakh-tu, came Latu. And later he was fondly known as Latu Maharaj in the Ramakrishna family.

Early life

Both his parents died while Latu was a child. He was taken care of by one of his uncles. His uncle was very poor and so in search of a job Latu travelled to Calcutta. He was hired in the house of Ramchandra Dutta. It was in his house that Latu heard about the Master. One day, he heard Ramchandra repeating Sri Ramakrishna's saying, 'God sees into the mind of a man, without concern for what he is or where he is. He who yearns for God and seeks none else, to such a man God reveals himself. One should call on God with a simple and innocent heart. Without sincere longing, none can see Him.' These words percolated into the depths of his being, and he developed a great desire to meet the God-man, whose sayings Ramachandra was repeating. One day, as Ramachandra Dutta was getting ready to visit Dakshineswar, Latu expressed his desire to accompany him, and the former agreed. Latu reached Dakshineswar and

upon seeing him the Master recognised some spiritual signs in him. He touched Latu and the latter felt a deep upsurge of devotion welling up from inside.

A sincere and obedient disciple

There is a saying that one can find thousands of teachers, but it is hard to find a sincere disciple. A sincere disciple takes all the pains in turning the teachings of his teacher literally into practice. Two illustrations from his life will illustrate the above statement.

One day, on the way to Dakshineswar, he was passing through a wine shop. For reasons unknown to him, he felt restless. Upon seeing the Master, he reported the matter to Him, and the latter told Latu Maharaj, that the smell of the liquor had disturbed his mind and also advised Latu to avoid it. He literally followed the advice and to avoid the wine shop, he started taking a roundabout way to reach Dakshineswar, even though it took much more time than before.

Another day, Latu was sleeping when it was the time of early evening. The Master sharply rebuked him and said, if you sleep in the evening, when will you meditate? You should meditate in such a way, that the whole night would pass unnoticed. Latu took the advice seriously. He struggled hard to conquer sleep at night. He briskly walked, splashed water on his face repeatedly. For two days and nights he struggled hard, finally, he overcame sleep at night.

Depth of his devotion

How deeply devoted Latu was to the Master can be felt from the following incidents. He would not start the day without seeing the Master first and bowing down to Him. One day, as he slept in the master's room, he woke up next morning and couldn't see the Master. He cried out loudly, 'Where are you? I am unable to see you.' The Master replied, wait a minute, I am coming.' Latu kept his hand pressed to his eyes until he came.

Sri Ramakrishna once narrated to the assembled disciples at Dakshineswar, the story of Jatila, the small boy, who felt scared walking through the forest road towards his school. But his poor mother made him go, asking him to call the name of Madhusudan dada (Krishna). Jatila had deep faith in his mother's words and followed her advice. As he cried out the name of Madhusudan, Krishna would appear, talk to him and escort him to school. That day, as M., the chronicler of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna was passing through panchavati, he heard a voice, somebody was weeping, 'Oh brother Madhusudan! Where are you?' It was none other than Latu.

One day, as Latu was massaging the feet of the Master, the latter asked, 'Do you know, what your Ramchandra is doing now?' Latu said, 'No.' The Master himself answered, 'Your Ramchandra is passing elephants through the eye of a needle.' Latu understood the significance of the Master's words. He was pouring spirituality on Him. Later, Latu

Maharaj said, 'I was an orphan, Thakur gave me shelter at his lotus feet. Had he not accepted me, I would have lived the life of an animal, spending all my days working like a slave.'

Prank with brother disciples

The disciples of the Master loved one another deeply. Sometimes they would play pranks with each other. A funny incident is worth mentioning. Once, Latu Maharaj had to undergo cataract operation, and so he needed money for that. At that time, his brother monk Abhedanandaji was in America and Latu Maharaj asked one of the disciples to write to Abhedanandaji for sending some money for the operation. Abhedanandaji arranged to send the money. Again later, after some time, Latu Maharaj wanted to have a watch, and when he wrote to Abhedanandaji for the money, the latter sent him a parcel. When the parcel was opened, the tail of a rattle snake appeared. Latu Maharaj expressed his boyish annoyance to this and said, I asked for a watch and brother Kali has sent me the tail of a rattlesnake instead!

Dive deep!

Since Latu Maharaj didn't have any formal education, he was unable to study any of the holy scriptures. He had to resort to prayer and japa alone and he devoted himself assiduously to the practice of meditation. The following narrative will indicate, how deep was his meditation.

During their stay at Baranagar, while meditating, Latu Maharaj would lose consciousness of his body. He had to be forced to take food. Sometimes, even after calling him several times, he would remain unconscious to the external world. One of the brother monks would keep a plate of food in his room and often it remained there, untouched and become stale.

A funny incident once occurred. Saradanandaji Maharaj, reminiscing about their days in Baranagar narrated, "Latu Maharaj at night would pretend to be asleep and sometimes even snore artificially. Then when everybody would doze off to sleep, he would start counting his beads. Once I heard the ticking of beads at night. Thinking it to be the movement of a rat, I woke up and the sound stopped. A little later, the sound again started. This went on again and again. Next night, I was watchful. The moment the sound started, I lighted a matchstick and saw Latu meditating with the beads. I laughed and said, 'You want to surpass us all?'"

After the passing away of the Master

Sri Ramakrishna left his mortal frame in 1886. Since then, up until 1912 when Latu Maharaj started to stay in Varanasi, he lived in Calcutta, alone, like a mendicant, depending wholly on God. Several days he stayed at Chandni, the bathing ghat at Dakshineswar. During those days devotees would supply him alms to meet his ends. Sometimes he stayed at Balaram Mandir, and sometimes at the press of Upendranath Mukherjee, a householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna who owned a large press. Much

later, after returning from the west when Swamiji came to know of the devoted service of Upen, he lifted his head above and prayed, 'Oh Lord! Bless Upen!'

Latu Maharaj was strict about not accepting gifts from anybody. He had to be pleaded too much and if he would find that the devotee's prayer is sincere, only then would he accept. Once, a devotee wanted to give Latu Maharaj some money. But the latter said, keep it with you now, you may need this money soon. Surprisingly, it happened and due to some urgency, the devotee needed that money.

Wisdom of a saint

Although Latu Maharaj couldn't study the scriptures, yet he attained the realisation of the truths contained in the scriptures. On one occasion, Latu Maharaj went with Swami Suddhanandaji to listen to the discourse of Katha Upanishad by Pandit Sasadhar Tarkachudamani. As he was narrating, "The Purusha, no larger than the thumb, the inner self, always dwells in the hearts of men. Let a man separate Him from the body with perseverance, as one separates the tender stalk from a blade of grass." Latu Maharaj cried out, 'Sudhir, what the pandit said is correct'. Invariably, Latu Maharaj must have had realisation of the Self.

Once two western women came to Latu Maharaj, when he was staying in Varanasi. They praised highly of the philanthropic work undertaken by the Ramakrishna Mission but were atheists and so didn't accept the need of God. A conversation took place, and a devotee acted as interpreter. They agreed with the Mission's ideal - to do good to others is the goal of life. Latu Maharaj explained to them that one cannot serve others without believing in the existence of God and generally while serving others one has to sacrifice a lot and sooner or later, this question 'what am I gaining by serving others' will pop up in the mind, and from that point, the interest to serve others will reduce. At this argument, these ladies felt puzzled. Then Latu Maharaj said, when one believes that God resides in the heart of every being, then serving others will be equal to serving God. By doing work in this way, selfishness will reduce, and the mind will gradually become more and more pure. So, believing in the existence of God and serving others in this spirit becomes a great spiritual practice. It matures into true worship at the end.

Once a devotee asked him, 'how can we love God, without seeing Him?' Latu Maharaj answered, 'When you send application for a job, do you see the person, whom you are writing to? Yet, your application reaches him. In the same way, when you sincerely pray to God, he hears your prayers.'

In the above, we have sprinkled some nuggets of wisdom, culled from the biography of the great saint! We shall consider our effort fruitful, if it helps to mould our life in the Ramakrishna mould and develop true devotion at the lotus feet of the Master!

Jai Ramakrishna

Swami Medhasananda's visit to Vedanta Centre of Sydney

Swami Medhasananda, the head of the Vedanta Society of Tokyo, Japan, visited the Vedanta Centre of Sydney, Australia from 28 August to 2 September 2024. On 1 September, he lectured on the Vedanta Work in Japan and on the important hallmarks of spiritual life.



Swami Sridharananda and Swami Medhasananda at the Vedanta Centre of Sydney

Swami Medhasananda's visit to Vedanta Centre of Brisbane

Swami Medhasanandaji arrived in Brisbane on Monday, 2nd September 2024. He was received at the airport by Swami Atmeshananda and Mr. Unni Nair. They drove to the Vedanta Centre in Springfield Lakes (located at 96, Vedanta drive, Springfield Lakes). The ashram premises, located amidst a 50 acre land donated by Dr. Mahalingam Sinnathamby of the Springfield City Corporation, consists of a) a shrine with a 120 seating capacity, b) Monastic quarters c) A soup kitchen where around 300 meals are cooked every week and distributed amongst the needy people free of cost c) a Food bank where groceries are stored for free distribution to the less privileged and d) Ma Sarada's kitchen wherein a Café is run every Saturday, which is managed by the volunteer-devotees. They cook the food and sell it at very reasonable prices. This activity helps the Centre to run the various philanthropic works undertaken by the Centre. e) The Centre also operates a free Chiropractic clinic on Fridays run by the students and supervisors of the Central Queensland University.

On the 3rd of September, Swami Bodhasaranandaji, Assistant General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, arrived from Melbourne, accompanied by Swami Sunisthananda of the Melbourne centre. It was a joyous reunion of four monks. In the evening of 3rd September, the

Swamis were invited to a sumptuous dinner at the residence of Mr. Biswadeep and Mrs. Debjani Basu. The Swamis first visited Mount Coot-tha (aboriginal word for a place of assembly where honey was collected), a hill from where the entire Brisbane City could be viewed. The Basu family's house is located very near to Mount Coot-tha.

On the 4th of September, the Swamis were met by Dr. Mahalingam Sinnathamby. Dr. Sinnathamby is the visionary who envisioned the city of Springfield and built the city after a long struggle. He is a disciple of Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, and his father was the first initiated disciple of Swami Virajanandaji Maharaj. Dr. Sinnathamby took the Swamis on a tour of Springfield city and later took them to his office to show a video on the origin and development of Springfield city.

After this the Swamis were driven by Swami Atmeshananda to city of Gold Coast. The city, located about 80 kms away from Springfield, is considered to be a jewel in the crown of Australia. Its white sand beaches and places of amusement attracts lots of visitors from all over the world. After walking on the beach of Gold Coast and taking in some of the sights of Gold Coasts, the Swamis had a picnic lunch at Coolangatta – where the states of New South Wales and Queensland meet.



In the evening of the 4th of September, the Centre had organised a Satsang entitled 'An evening with the Swamis'. After evening Aratrikam, Swami Medhasanandaji spoke about the origin and development of the Ramakrishna-Sarada-Vivekananda movement in Japan which was highly appreciated by the audience. He was followed by Swami Bodhasaranandaji who spoke about Ramakrishna Math and Mission with special emphasis on the Mayavati centre of the Order. The Federal Senator for the state of Queensland – Mr. Paul Scarr – attended this event and spoke on the occasion. He was specially charmed with the development of the Order's work in Japan. He joined the Swamis in a dinner after the event. A large number of devotees – 80 in number, attended this programme.

The Swamis left for Cairns – a city to the North of Brisbane – about 2 hours' flying time – to see the Great Barrier reef. Unfortunately, the tour operator could not deliver the promised sights which was a disappointment but nevertheless, the presence of the Swamis at the residence of Dr. Ashim and Mrs. Shibani Sinha who hosted them at their lovely home, brought peace and blessedness to the devotees. Swami Medhasanandaji flew from Cairns to Tokyo on the 7th of September reaching the same day.



• Story to Remember •

Who makes the decisions?

A number of us Westerners were meditating together at a Buddhist ashram in Bodh Gaya. After a time, some of us were ready to take a break and go on to Delhi, to celebrate Shiva's birthday. One of the women in the group, who had come to India overland by charter bus, reported that the bus driver wanted to hang out with us, too. So, thirty-four of us left Bodh Gaya and met the bus in Benares and started to drive to Delhi.

One of the men in the group, Danny, had left the courses briefly in the middle to visit Allahabad, in order to experience a Kumbha Mela. He had returned deeply impressed and bringing us each small medallions depicting the monkey, Hanuman, which he had purchased on the mela grounds.

When it turned out that the bus route went right by Allahabad, Danny pressed us to visit the mela grounds. I protested that the mela was now over and it would just be an empty piece of riverbank. But he pointed out that it was one of the most sacred spots in India. Some of us were tired, for it was only our first day out in the world after such sustained meditation practice, and all we really wanted was to get to the dharmasala where we planned to stay overnight. The thought of even driving the few miles out of our way to get to the river was not appealing, and yet it was a very holy place. I weighed the merits of the alternatives and finally agreed that we should go to the river for a brief stop to watch the sunset.

As we approached and drove down into the mela grounds, which were now quite deserted, the driver asked where he should park. Danny pointed to a place that he said was near a Hanuman temple and also was the spot where he had purchased the small medallions.

As the bus was pulling up to that spot, someone yelled, "There's Maharajji!"

Sure enough, walking right by the bus with Dada, there he was. We all scrambled off the bus and rushed to his feet. I was having a hysterical crying-laughing fit. I remember kissing his feet in bliss.

Dada later told us that as the bus came into view, Maharajji had said, "Well, they've come."

Maharajji instructed us to follow them, and the bus followed the bicycle rickshaw to Dada's house on the suburban street of this great university city. Within minutes we were given food, and arrangements were made for us to lodge at a nearby estate with another devotee. I was told that since morning the servants had been preparing food under Maharajji's orders in anticipation of our coming. But if that were so, which of us thought he was making a decision in the bus about whether to visit the mela grounds? Apparently, all was not as I "thought" it was.

(From Miracle of Love: Stories about Neem Karoli Baba by Ram Dass)

The Vedanta Society of Japan (Nippon Vedanta Kyokai)
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