



# REACH

## News letter of VEDANTA CENTRES OF AUSTRALIA

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### SAYINGS AND TEACHINGS

#### LOVE THE LOTUS FEET OF THE MOTHER

“One should not reason too much; it is enough if one loves the Lotus Feet of the Mother. Too much reasoning throws the mind into confusion. You get clear water if you drink from the surface of a pool. Put your hand deeper and stir the water, and it becomes muddy. Therefore pray to God for devotion.”

--- Sri Ramakrishna

*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*  
Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai,  
page 186.

#### ALWAYS DISCRIMINATE

“My child, this mind is just like a wild elephant. It races with the wind. Therefore one should discriminate all the time. One should work hard for the realisation of God.”

--- Sri Sarada Devi

*The Gospel of the Holy Mother*  
Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai,  
Page 61.

#### CUT ASUNDER THE SELF-IMPOSED BONDAGE

“The whole gist of Jnana-Yoga is to show humanity the method of undoing this Karma. A caterpillar spins a little cocoon around itself out of the substance of its own body and at last finds itself imprisoned. It may cry and weep and howl there; nobody will come to its rescue until it becomes wise and then comes out, a beautiful butterfly. So with these our bondages. We are



Various Temples at the Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math, the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Howrah (West Bengal), India as seen from the Ganges.

### CALENDAR OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Function	Centre	Date
Birth Anniversary Celebration of Sri Ramakrishna	Adelaide	24 March 2007
	Brisbane	10 March 2007
	Melbourne	24 February 2007
	Sydney	19 February 2007
Shiva –Ratri	Sydney	16 February 2007
Formal Inauguration	Adelaide	28 April 2007
Formal Inauguration	Perth	17-18 March 2007
Annual Celebration	Melbourne	31 March 2007

going around and around ourselves through countless ages. And now we feel miserable and cry and lament over our bondage. But crying and weeping will be of no avail. We must set ourselves to cutting these bondages.”

--- Swami Vivekananda

*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Volume 1X. Advaita

### Welcome

We welcome you all to the Ramakrishna—Vedanta Movement as members and participate in propagation of the Universal message of Vedanta as epitomised in the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda.

# News and activities of Vedanta Centres of Australia and New Zealand

## For the period From November 2006 to January 2007

### ADELAIDE CENTRE

Swami Sridharananda, during the period under review, visited Adelaide three days a month and held classes on *Bhagavad-Gita* and *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. The talks of the Swami are held in the Dulwich Community Centre and are being recorded by the devotees.

The group observed the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda on the 20th of January 2007. The group will celebrate its formal inaugural function as a registered body under the administrative control of the Vedanta Centre of Sydney on the 28th of April 2007. For details of the programme please contact Mr. Raman Sharma, Secretary, on 08-8431 9775 or Mrs. Pathma Iswaran on 08-8379 5336.

### BRISBANE CENTRE

#### 1. Daily Activities:

The Centre is located at **181, Burbong Street, Chapel Hill, QLD 4073**, Phone no. 07-3720 0228. A resident volunteer looks after the day-to-day activities at the Centre. Morning worship, evening *ārati*, *bhajans* and reading from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* are the regular activities conducted by the group.

#### 2. Monthly Activities:

Swami Atmешananda visited Brisbane during the period under review, from the first Saturday to Wednesday of every month and conducted classes at the Centre and at other locations of Brisbane.

#### 3. Celebrations:

The birth anniversary of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi was celebrated on the 8th of December 2006. A short worship was

performed in which all the devotees present took part. Swami Atmешananda gave a talk on the life and teachings of Holy Mother after the worship. On the 24th December, the Christmas Eve was celebrated. On the 1st of January 2007, the *Kalpataru* day was observed at the centre. Dr. Ashim Majumdar read about the incident that took place in the life of Sri Ramakrishna on the 1st of January 1886 at the Cossipore garden house in Kolkata when he blessed all devotees for their spiritual awareness. It was followed by a talk by Swami Tadananda. In November the local devotees actively participated in a 'working bee' programme.

### CANBERRA CENTRE

During the period under review, Swami Sridharananda conducted classes based on *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gitā* and *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* on the first weekend of every month at the Majura Community Centre, Canberra. The group desired that Swami Sridharananda visit them twice every month instead of once from the present calendar year. In the interest of the work in Canberra it has been decided to do so. The contact phone number of Mr. J. Venkataraman, Secretary, is 02-6258 7612 and of Mr. Ian Doherty, Treasurer is 02-6247 8519.

### MELBOURNE CENTRE

#### 1. Daily Activities:

The Centre conducted its daily activities at its premises located at **7 Judy Court, Vermont, VIC 3133**. The daily programme consists of evening *ārati*, through set hymns, chanting of *stotras*, scriptural readings and meditation from 7.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m. A resident volunteer looks after the services in the morning hours and on other occasions. All the publication in the form of books, photos, audio and visual

media on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and literature on Vedanta and other subjects are made available through the bookstall. For further information please contact Mr. Suresh Ravinutala, Secretary, on 03-9803 6154 or Mr. Govindan Iyer, Treasurer, on 03-9543 4091.

#### 2. Monthly Activities:

**Sunday Meetings** were conducted on the second Sunday of each month from 5.00 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. The meetings start with prayer, recitation of mantras, singing of *bhajans* and selected readings from relevant scriptures followed by related discussions and then conclude with an *ārati* and distribution of *prasad*.

Swami Sridharananda conducted the discourses on the *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita* at Holmesglen TAFE from Thursday to Saturday of a week during his monthly visit. These discourses are held on chapter four (Jnana-Karma-sannyasa Yoga) of *Srimad-Bhagavad Gita*. The discourses are being recorded and are available in Audio, Video, and MP3 formats.

#### 3. Celebrations:

The birth anniversary celebration of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi was observed on the 16th of December 2006. A simple worship was performed with flower offering and chanting of *stotras* in which all the attending devotees participated. Swami Sridharananda delivered a talk on the life and teachings of Holy Mother after the worship.

The devotees observed the *Kalpataru* day on the 1st of January 2007 by singing *bhajans* and reading from the biography of Sri Ramakrishna. The birth anniversary celebration of Swami Vivekananda was also observed on the 13th of January 2007. Swami Sridharananda spoke on the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda.

## PERTH CENTRE

A devotee had bequeathed her own residence located at **2B Roe Close, Bull Creek W.A. 6149** for the purpose of starting the activities of the Vedanta Movement in Perth. The property has been accepted by the organisation and its renovation will be completed by the end of February 2007. To celebrate the inaugural function along with the devotees all the swamis of the Ramakrishna Order posted in Australia are scheduled to visit the Centre during the function on the 17th and 18th of March 2007 as per fixed programme. Swami Damodarananda is expected to reach Perth on the 10th of March 2007 and will continue to stay there even after the function. For further information please contact Ms. Sharmini Lingam on 08-9446 9585 or Mr. Unni Krishnan on 08-9206 0853.

## SYDNEY CENTRE

### 1. Daily Activities:

Worship and meditation in the morning and the vesper service followed by devotional singing in the evening form the main focus of the daily activities. Counselling, interviews and discussions with devotees are also conducted on a daily basis. The library facility is available to devotees for reference and research. The Centre maintains a bookstall which has a range of books on the Ramakrishna - Vivekananda literature as well as literature on Vedanta, Yoga and other scriptures. Devotional songs, discourses on *Srimad-Bhagavad-*

*Gita*, the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, *Mundaka Upanisad*, etc. are also available in various media.

### 2. Weekly and monthly Activities:

a) During the period under review Swami Sridharananda conducted the following weekly classes in Sydney:

The discourses on *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gitā* were held every Sunday morning from 9.45 a.m. to 10.45 a.m. at the South Strathfield Bowling Club, Augusta Street, Strathfield. The classes resumed in January 2007 after a three week-long Christmas-New Year break .

The classes on *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* were held every Wednesday in the evening from 7.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. preceded by vesper service at the Vedanta Centre, Ashfield. These classes also resumed after a three-week break.

Monthly classes on the *Nārada Bhakti Sutras* have resumed from February 2007. It is being held at the residence of Mr. Gopinath Swamy Rao at 7 Grandview Court, Bella Vista, NSW 2153, (Phone number 02 9620 7583). The class starts at 7-30 p.m.

b) Swami Atmeshananda conducted moral and spiritual **education classes for children** at the Vedanta Centre on Sundays up to November 2006. He taught chanting, meditation and devotional singing to children.



**Worship on the Birth Anniversary of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi at the shrine of Sydney Centre**

The classes resumed from February 2007 after the school holidays.

c) Some devotees have availed of the opportunity of counselling and guidance services from the swamis at the centre with prior appointment.

d) **Yogasana classes** for adults were held on every Tuesday at the Centre from 7-30 p.m. to 8-30 p.m. except a brief period of Christmas-New Year holidays. The Yogasana class for children has been withheld for the present.

e) **Career guidance** sessions were conducted on the second Saturday of every month from 3-30 p.m. to 6-30 p.m. for the new migrants to Australia to help them find suitable jobs. Mr. Abhijit Guha and his dedicated band of volunteers conducted the sessions.

### 3. Celebrations:

The birth anniversary celebration of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi was observed with solemnity on the 11th of December 2006. Swami Sridharananda spoke on the life and teachings of Holy Mother on the occasion.

The devotees observed the *Kalpataru* day on the 1st of January 2007 by singing bhajans. On the 10th of January 2007 the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda was celebrated with worship, chanting and rendering of *bhajans*. Swami Sridharananda spoke on the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda.



**Worship in progress on the Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda at the shrine of Sydney Centre**

## Feature Article:

### SRI RAMAKRISHNA AT DAKSHINESWAR - Setting of Stage for the Prophet of New Age

*The following article is a collation of excerpts from various recognised sources on the life of Sri Ramakrishna. The article will unravel how through the Divine inspiration a temple of the Divine Mother was built at Dakshineswar, Calcutta (now Kolkata) and Sri Ramakrishna was brought there for a divine purpose.*

#### Sri Ramakrishna according to Swami Vivekananda

“The time was ripe for one to be born who in one body would have the brilliant intellect of Shankara and the wonderfully expansive, infinite heart of Chaitanya; one who would see in every sect the same spirit working, the same God; one who would see God in every being, one whose heart would weep for the poor, for the weak, for the outcast, for the downtrodden, for every one in this world, inside India or outside India; and at the same time whose grand brilliant intellect would conceive of such noble thoughts as would harmonise all conflicting sects, not only in India but outside of India, and bring a marvellous harmony, the universal religion of head and heart into existence. There he lived, without any book-learning whatsoever; this great intellect never learnt even to write his own name, but the most brilliant graduates of our university found in him an intellectual giant. He was a strange man, this Sri Ramakrishna”

- - - Swami Vivekananda



Sri Ramakrishna in spiritual ecstasy (Samadhi) in a studio in Kolkata

#### SRI RAMAKRISHNA IN CALCUTTA AND DAKSHINESWAR

Gadadhar was (then) seventeen. Ramkumar, finding his brother indifferent to school education, brought him to Calcutta, intending to supervise his studies and also get his help in house-keeping. The coming of Gadadhar to Calcutta was an event of far-reaching consequence. The city, being the capital of the greater part of India at that time, was, as it were, a place of dialogue and confrontation between the western and eastern cultures. Ramkumar tried to persuade his brother to pursue his studies, but in vain. Gadadhar spurned this education which he described as merely ‘bread winning.’

At that time, at Dakshineswar, a northern suburb of Calcutta, a stage was being set for the enacting of the grand drama in which Gadadhar was transformed from a simple village lad into the prophet of new India. Rani Rashmani, a wealthy widow, was inspired to build a temple of Mother Kali on the bank

of the Ganga. The temple was situated amid trees and gardens in extensive grounds. There were also shrines dedicated to Shiva and to Radha-Govinda. The place breathed a holy atmosphere. Ramkumar, who was engaged for the dedication of the temple, and subsequently to conduct the daily worship of the Goddess Kali, brought Gadadhar with him.

Mathuranath Biswas, the son-in-law of Rani Rashmani, himself a devotee of Mother Kali, was greatly attracted to this young man of bright countenance who was seen to be moving about the gardens with an air of radiant innocent, like a young child. He wanted Gadadhar to be permanently associated with the worship of the Goddess, and persuaded him, in spite of his objections, to take up this work of helping his brother in the decoration of the image and the performance of the worship.

#### DEVOTION TO GANGA AND MOTHER KALI

What a deep devotion to the Ganga,

the Master had all his life. He used to call the water of the Ganga, *Brahma-vāri*, that is, Brahman in the form of water. He said, “Any person living on either bank of the Ganga has his heart changed into one like that of the Gods, and virtues manifest therein of themselves. The wind filled with the sacred particles of the water of the Ganga purifies the land on both sides as far as it blows. By the grace of the Bhāgirathi, the daughter of the great sage Bhagirath, goodness, austerity, generosity, devotion to God and spiritual steadfastness are always manifest in the lives of the people living in those parts of the land.” If anybody talked of worldly things for a long time or mixed with worldly people, the master would ask him to drink a little of the water of the Ganga. If a man, averse to God and attached to worldliness, sat in any part of the sacred abode of the Divine Mother and polluted it by worldly thoughts, he would sprinkle there the water of the Ganga.

Within a few days the impact of the

many factors in his new environment brought about a transformation in the Master's mind. There was the situation of the temple on the banks of the imposing Ganga. There were those beautiful gardens filled with the chirping of birds. There was the divine service performed by devout Sadhakas in the spacious temple. There was the genuine affection of his elder brother who was verily like a father to him. And there was also the touch of faith and devotion of Rani Rāshmani and her son-in-law Mathur Babu on everything in the place. All these were experiences that conspired to endear Dakshineswar to him and make it a second Kamarpukur in his eyes.

Another person intimately connected with the Master's life came to Dakshineswar about this time. Hridayram Mukhopadhyaya, a son of the Master's cousin, came to Burdwan at that time in search of employment. When he came to know that his maternal uncles were living in the new temple of Rani Rashmani, he visited the Dakshineswar temple without delay and began to spend his time joyfully there in the company of Sri Ramakrishna, his uncle. They were nearly of the same age and familiar with each other from childhood.

During this time Hriday noticed that the Master eluded him for some time. At such times on some days, when he went in search of him, he found him returning from the direction of the Panchavati. This is what Hriday said during one such experience, "Once at that time the Master had in mind to make an image of Siva for worship. As soon as there arose that desire in his mind, he took some earth from the bed of the river, made with his own hands an image of Siva, together with the bull, the tabor etc and began to worship Him in the image. Mathur happened to come there in the course of a stroll and, eager to learn what deity the Master was worshipping intently, approached and saw the image. Though not big,

the image was beautiful. Mathur was delighted to see it. He felt that the images, so expressive of divine nature, were not available in the market. He was astonished to learn from Hriday that the Master knew how to make images of deities and set broken parts of images. He requested that the image might be given over to him after the worship.

When Mathur got the image he examined it minutely and being quite charmed with it, sent it to the Rani. Even shortly before this incident, the idea of appointing the Master for temple duties had dawned on Mathur. That idea became stronger when he became acquainted with the rare accomplishment of the Master. The Master had already heard from his brother of that intention of Mathur, but ignored it, as he had made a firm resolve from childhood that he "would not serve anyone but God." When Hriday questioned his reluctance the Master replied, "I have no mind to be tied down to service for life. Besides, if I agree to perform the worship here, I must be responsible for the ornaments on the person of the Goddess; that is a difficult task; it will not be possible for me. But if you take that responsibility and stay here, I have no objection to perform the worship." The Master subsequently expressed his conditional assent, to which Mathur agreed.

That same year, on the day after the celebration of Sri Krishna's birthday, there was an accident in the Radhakanta Temple. According to custom, the images of Krishna and Radha were removed from the shrine after the worship was over and placed on beds in another room. The priest, in the course of carrying the image of Govinda, fell and as a result, one leg of the image was broken. There arose a great commotion in the temple over the event. It was considered unlucky and an evil omen; and the priest was immediately dismissed for his carelessness. The Pandits were called together to decide what

should be done next. They ruled that a broken image could not be worshipped; another image was to be made and the old one thrown into the Ganges.

But the Rani was unwilling to throw away an image which she had once begun to worship. At Mathur's suggestion, she consulted Sri Ramakrishna – of whom they now both had such a high opinion that they always called him – this youth not out of his teens – 'Father'! Before replying to the question, Sri Ramakrishna pondered over it deeply and went into an ecstatic spiritual mood. Then he said, "If one of the Rani's sons-in-law were to break a leg, would she throw him away and put someone else in his place? Wouldn't she rather have him cured by a doctor? Let it be the same in this case. Mend the image and worship it as before."

Some of the pandits were shocked by this demonstration of divinely-inspired common sense; but the Rani and Mathur were delighted. Ramakrishna mended the image himself – so skilfully that no one thereafter was able to see the break in the limb. Later, when Sri Ramakrishna was asked by a land-owner, 'Sir, is it true that the Krishna at Dakshineswar has been broken?' he replied scornfully, 'Can He who is the indivisible whole be broken? A fine idea!'

Once a thief broke into the temple of Vishnu and robbed the image of its jewels. Mathuranath and Sri Ramakrishna went to the temple to see what the matter was. Addressing the image, Mathur said bitterly, "What a shame, Lord! You are so worthless! The thief took all the ornaments from your body and You couldn't do a thing about it." Thereupon (Sri Ramakrishna) said to Mathur: "Shame on you! How improper your words are! To God, the jewels you talk so much about are only lumps of clay. Lakshmi, the Goddess of Fortune, is His consort. Do you mean to say that

He should spend sleepless nights because a thief has taken your few rupees? You mustn't say such things.' Can one ever bring God under control through wealth? He can be tamed only through love. He wants from His devotees love, devotion, feeling, discrimination and renunciation."

Hriday gave an insight of the Master's way of worship. Whoever saw it became charmed. Sri Ramakrishna sang most sweetly and completely identified himself with the emotions of the songs, and the correctness of time and cadence. Whenever the Rani came to Dakshineswar, she sent for Sri Ramakrishna and listened to his songs. He became so absorbed in the emotions of the song at the time of singing - Hriday used to say that while singing, copious tears flowed from the Master's eyes. At the time of worship he got so absorbed in it that he would be totally unaware of

anyone approaching or calling him. One day Sri Ramakrishna entered one of the Shiva temples at Dakshineswar and began to recite the Mahimnah-Stotra, a beautiful hymn in praise of Lord Shiva. Soon he was overpowered with emotion at the thought of His great glory and forgot the world. 'O Lord, how can I describe Thy Infinite glory?'-were the only words that came from his lips. Tears began to flow profusely from his eyes. His strange conduct caused many people to gather around him. Mathur also hurried to the spot. An officious employee suggested that this 'mad' man be removed from the proximity of the Deity, whereupon Mathur said that anyone touching Sri Ramakrishna would do so at his own peril.

### CONCLUSION

Ramkumar's anxieties were now put to rest. Ramakrishna appeared to be settling down in a respectable position. Ramkumar was relieved at

this; for he was now in his fifties and his health was poor. He began to let Ramakrishna perform the worship in the Kali Temple while he performed the worship of Krishna and Radha. Perhaps he did this because he wanted to prepare Ramakrishna to take over his duties as soon as possible. With the demise of Ramkumar in 1856, Gadadhar was appointed the principal priest in the Mother's shrine, with his nephew Hriday as assistant.

Sources:

1. *Ramakrishna and His Disciples* by Christopher Isherwood, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1965.
2. *Sri Ramakrishna: Life and Teachings* by Swami Tapasyananda. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, India.
3. *Sri Ramakrishna: A Biography in Pictures*. Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, 1976.
4. *Sri Ramakrishna: The Great Master* by Swami Saradananda. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, India. 1952.



Birth Anniversary Celebration of Swami Vivekananda in Adelaide

**Following discourses by Swami Sridharananda are available in Multimedia DVDs (PAL and NTSC) and Audio CDs uncompressed (.wav) and MP3 format (.mp3).**

**Available titles:**

1. Patanjali Yoga Sutras: Chapter 1.
2. Patanjali Yoga Sutras: Chapter 2.
3. Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 5.
4. Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 6.
5. Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 7.
6. Introduction to Mundaka Upanisad.
7. Concept of Karma Yoga.
8. Concept of Universal Religion.
9. How to study Bhagavad Gita?
10. Mind alone is the cause of Bondage and Liberation.

The price list and order form may be downloaded from our website.

**The ennobling, man making and character building literature on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda can be had from our bookstalls of various centres.**

The birth anniversary of the Swami was observed in some centres of the order on Tuesday, the 22<sup>th</sup> of January 2007.

## Birth and Childhood

Sarada Prasanna Mitra was born in 1865 in the village of Naora. His parents believed that he was born to them through the Grace of the Divine Mother Durga; therefore they named him 'Sarada,' another name for Durga. The astrologer who drew up his horoscope said that Sarada was born at an auspicious time, and predicted that he would be a great yogi and a man of wisdom. He belonged to a rich landowning family and was over-indulged as a child so that he became accustomed to being waited on. Shivakrishna, Sarada's father was a religious man who spent most of his time in worship and the study of the scriptures; he therefore raised his son in a spiritual atmosphere. Sarada had such a wonderful memory that he memorised 108 hymns and salutation mantras on different Gods and Goddesses before he was fourteen. He could also chant the Gita, the Chandi, and the Upanishads in a melodious voice. He was pure, simple, and religious-minded even as a boy. His contact with Sri Ramakrishna when he was nineteen further stimulated his religious spirit.

## Education and first meeting with Sri Ramakrishna

Like Rakhai and Baburam, he attended Mahendra Nath Gupta's (in short M ) school. When he went to take the entrance examination at the Calcutta University, it was expected that he would do brilliantly, for he was one of the school's best pupils. But, on the second day of the examination, Sarada Prasanna lost a gold watch which was his most treasured possession; this upset him so much that he failed to do himself justice and passed in the second division only. For weeks Sarada was in despair. M. loved the



Swami Trigunatitananda and the first Hindu Temple in the West constructed by him.

boy, and instead of laughing at him as a cry-baby, took him to see Sri Ramakrishna. Sarada began to visit Dakshineswar regularly. One hot day, Ramakrishna asked Sarada to bring water and wash his feet. Sarada, regarding all kinds of work as menial, flushed with humiliation, especially as several of his friends were present. But Ramakrishna repeated the request and he had to obey. He used to say later that this incident was the beginning of his education in the spirit of service.

He started going to college, but often missed classes in order to be with Ramakrishna. His parents wanted him to marry. He refused, ran away from home and was brought back. Yet he passed his examination, although he had hardly studied for nearly a year. His elder brother feared so greatly that Sarada would become a monk that he paid a huge sum of money for the performance of a six-week-long sacrificial ceremony which was supposed to change Sarada's mind by supernatural means and incline him towards a worldly life. It failed to do so.

## Austerity at Baranagore Math

After the disciples of Ramakrishna lost their beloved Master, they rented a dilapidated house at

Baranagore with the help of Surendra Nath Mitra. This house became the first Ramakrishna Monastery. Sarada continued to visit his brother disciples, although his parents strongly disapproved. Before Christmas 1886, the disciples decided to visit Antpur, the birthplace of Baburam. There, on Christmas Eve, the disciples took vows of renunciation in front of a sacrificial fire. They vowed they would never go back to family life. Their Master had enkindled the fire of renunciation and the burning desire for liberation in their hearts. One day Sarada went to bathe in a pond, but he did not know how to swim. Suddenly he slipped from a step and fell into deep water. Immediately Niranjana dived into the water and rescued him. This incident of facing death flared his fire of renunciation further.

In January 1887 Sarada and other disciples performed the Viraja Homa, a special fire sacrifice, in front of Sri Ramakrishna's picture and took their final monastic vows. Swami Vivekananda gave Sarada the name "Swami Trigunatitananda." Swami Vivekananda later teased him about his long name and asked him to shorten it, so he was called by the name "Trigunatita".

## With Holy Mother

When Holy Mother was living at Nilambar Babu's garden house in Belur (from 1894 to 1895), Swami Trigunatita was her attendant. He would spread a white cloth under the *shefalika* flower tree (an autumnal white fragrant flower) so that the blooms might not fall in the dust. Holy Mother would use those flowers for her morning worship. He was extremely thoughtful and resourceful in every action.

In October 1999 Holy Mother was going to Jayrambati in a bullock cart via Burdwan. It was past midnight. Swami Trigunatitananda was walking in front of the carriage as her bodyguard, with a heavy stick on his shoulder. Suddenly he saw a wide breach in the road made by a flood. At once he realised that when the carriage came to the opening, it would either overturn or receive a terrific jolt, not only disturbing the Mother's sleep but possibly hurting her physically. Immediately he lay his large body in the breach and asked the driver to drive the vehicle over him. Luckily, Holy Mother awoke before this happened. She took in the situation, and rebuked her disciple for his rashness.

Swami Trigunatitananda's love for and faith in Holy Mother was phenomenal. Once Yogin-ma, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, asked the swami to buy some hot chillies for Holy Mother. In his eagerness to get the hottest possible, he walked through many markets, tasting all the hot chillies by chewing one of each, until his tongue became red and swollen. At last he found the hottest ones at Barabazaar and brought them to Holy Mother. When Holy Mother heard about it, she said, "What devotion to the Guru." Later when the swami went to America, he sent money regularly for Holy Mother's personal service.

## Later Years

After Sarada had become Swami Trigunatitananda, he made several

pilgrimages but spent most of his time in Calcutta. During the famine of 1897 in the Dinajpur district, he organised relief work. He himself had strange eating capacities. He could live for a long time on a few pieces of fruit a day; then again he could eat at a sitting enough for four or five people. Once, when Trigunatitananda was on pilgrimage, he went into an inn accompanied by a small boy. The swami asked the innkeeper if he could charge less for the boy's food, since he would certainly not eat as much as an adult. But the innkeeper replied curtly that everyone must pay the same price. So Trigunatitananda, to teach him a lesson, began to eat and eat and eat. At last the innkeeper appeared and told him humbly, "Holy Sir – I won't charge you anything for what you have eaten, but now you must stop, because we have no more food in the house."

After Vivekananda's passing away in 1902, Brahmananda, knowing that Turiyananda would not now return to America, asked Trigunatitananda to go and take the Swami's place at the San Francisco Centre. So Swami Trigunatitananda sailed for the United States towards the end of that year. He was determined to remain a vegetarian at all costs, and believing in his simplicity that there might not be any vegetables in America, he went fully prepared to live on bread and water.

Under Swami Trigunatitananda's direction, the first Hindu Temple in America was built in San Francisco and dedicated in 1906, shortly after the earthquake and fire. It survived these disasters and stands to this day, a charmingly quaint old building with small oriental domes on its roof.

Every year, the Swami would take a selected group of devotees to the Shanti Ashrama and teach and meditate with them there. He was fond of teaching by means of maxims and mottoes, and had these framed and hung on the walls. 'Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty', 'Live like a hermit but work like a

horse', 'Do it now', 'Watch and pray', 'Do or die – but you will not die.' He believed in singing as a devotional exercise and led his young male disciples in hymns and chants up on the roof of the temple or down by the shore of the bay in the early morning, astonishing the fishermen and sailors passing on boats.

In December 1914, Swami Trigunatitananda, although unwell, was holding a Sunday service in the temple when a young man, a former student who had become mentally imbalanced, threw a bomb at him. The young man was killed instantly by his own bomb and the Swami was badly hurt. On the way to hospital, Swami Trigunatitananda spoke of his attacker with deep compassion. He died of his injuries early in January 1915.

## His universal outlook:

Swami Trigunatitananda drew a set of 'Rules and Regulations Governing Vedanta Centres'. The opening few lines are given below:

"This is a **great** relative world. Here every person is closely related to every other person. Here one's life, is not really one's own life, but the life of the whole world. Here, one's gain is the gain of the whole world, and one's loss is the loss of the whole world. The whole world is one Great Brotherhood. In such a Brotherhood, if you be good, others will also get the benefit; and if one be wrong then others also will have to suffer. So, let us try to be good to ourselves and to others. Let us try to make ourselves better and make others also better. In this relative world, we need mutual help. So let us help ourselves and help others too."

## Sources:

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