

# CHICAGO CALLING

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December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022 the devotees and followers of Ramakrishna – Vivekananda – Vedanta celebrated the Tithi Puja of Sri Ma Sarada Devi – the Supreme Divinity advented as a girl child, as the eldest daughter of Ramachandra and Shyamasundari on Thursday, December 22, 1853 in Jayrambati, a beautiful village of Bengal.

The word “Sri” indicates the Divine Power. According to Vedanta, Brahman, the all-pervading Consciousness is basically inactive. Brahman cannot do anything. It acts through Its Power or ‘Sakti’ also known as ‘Maya’, ‘Prakriti’, ‘Sri’.

This power is responsible for Creation, Preservation and also Dissolution. Because of these activities Hindus consider the Power of the Supreme Being as Mother or ‘Ma’.

The actual name after the prefix is Sarada which means The Goddess of Learning. Hindus, traditionally consider “Sarawati” as the Goddess of Learning. Another name of Saraswati is Sarada.

Devi is goddess. Sri Ma Sarada Devi who is also referred by the devotees as Holy Mother – displayed in this modern age the Motherhood of God.

Sir John Woodroffe in his book, “Shakti & Shakta” mentioned (chapter – 3, Page 17): *“There is no word of wider content in any language than this Sanskrit term “Shakti”, meaning ‘Power’. For Shakti in the highest causal sense is God as Mother... Universe issues from Her womb.”*

“Obeisance be to Her who is Pure Being – Consciousness – Bliss, as Power, who exist in the form of Time and Space and all that is therein, who is the radiant Illuminatrix in all beings.” – (Yoginihridaya Tantra).

Ma Sarada Devi was asked by one devotee (Swami Arupananda), Mother, are you everyone’s mother? Without hesitation She replied, “Yes”. He again asked, are you the mother of all the other living beings? “Yes, even theirs” was her reply. Ma Sarada is the embodiment of God as Mother. In

this context I would like to mention the memoirs of Sindhunath Panda. He has written that mother met two European devotees. Girish was acting as the translator. The lady asked Mother, “Mother, am I your daughter?” In reply Mother said, “Yes, you are my daughter.” Then the western gentleman asked – “How are we to understand that you are the Mother of the Universe?” The Mother replied, “As you have come here, you will be able to understand it.”

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, to make the devotees aware about the Ma Sarada’s actual identity said, “Is she an ordinary lady? She is My Shakti, My Power.”

Vedantins believe that the Supreme Brahman keeps beings bound to this world of Birth and Death through It’s power – Maya Shakti. But in this age the Supreme Being who advented as Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna turned His Shakti – Sri Sarada as ‘Mother’, the bestower of Love and Liberation. In a talk Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji beautifully expressed an incident that reveals the plan of God to make his binding power – ‘Maya Shakti’. To ‘Mukti Shakti’, power of Liberation – Sri Ma Sarada Devi.

I give you one instance of Mothers’s great love for people who came and called her ‘Mother’. Sri



Ramakrishna was then living at Dakshineswar while the Holy Mother stayed in the tiny room called ‘Nahavat’, a few yards from the room of the Master. But the Holy Mother could not meet Sri Ramakrishna more than twice when she carried food to Sri Ramakrishna, once at lunch time and then again at dinner time. It

so happened that one day, one lady came and prayed to her: 'Mother, today I would like to carry the food to Sri Ramakrishna. So the Mother could not carry the food plate to him, she handed over the food plate to the devotee who took it to Sri Ramakrishna.

Sri Ramakrishna wanted to take the food but could not take it. He made several attempts but could not touch the food. The Holy mother got the news, came to him and with folded hands prayed to the Master: 'Please take this today. Tomorrow, I shall bring the food myself. Sri Ramakrishna said, 'No, the food is contaminated, I cannot take it.'

Mother requested him again and again to take the food, but he said, 'I will take it today if you promise that you will not send my food through anybody and everybody in future.' Again, with folded hands, the Holy Mother said, 'Thakur! I cannot give you my word that way. If anybody comes to me calling me 'Mother' and asks for the favor of bringing food to you, I cannot deny her that.' That was an event when the Holy Mother 'seemingly' disobeyed her Master. But the Master was not annoyed because that was exactly what he wanted; he was preparing the Holy Mother to assume the role of the Universal Mother.



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

-- Sri Sarada Devi

*Next three articles are prepared based on the transcriptions of Lectures delivered at the Inauguration of the Home of Harmony on May 21, 2022*

## The Message of Harmony in Teachings and Life of Sri Ma Sarada

Swami Kripamayananda  
Head, Vedanta Society of Toronto

Sri Maa Sarada, reverentially and affectionately called as Holy Mother by millions of people all over the world, was the consort of Sri Ramakrishna. She was a great spiritual teacher of mankind. Her life and teachings manifest deepest spiritual realization and harmony at its highest. All her life is harmony in living.

In her, all conflicts and frictions merged in her unbounded love for whole humanity, even beyond, nobody was excluded. Not only human beings, even animals were not excluded from her motherly love. In her, we find solace, hope, fearlessness, and peace. To her, a Muslim Amjad, a Hindu Swami Saradananda, and a Christian Sister Nivedita were equally loved. They found equal affection and closeness; all of them, no matter to which religion anyone belonged. Poor and rich, learned and illiterate, all were her children equally. To her once comes a lady who was a porter carrying goods to her village. She felt sick at night, and spoiled the bed and the linen. Holy mother got to know of this and after giving her food, asked her to leave early in the morning. And she herself cleaned the dirty linen with her own hands; that was her motherly love. When her disciples came, and had food, and wanted to clean the plates, she said no, you can't do that. They said, we are your disciples, you are our guru, how can we let you clean our plates that we have used. She said, I am your mother more than your guru. How can a mother let her children clean her plates? So, that was the harmony of everyone and every being that we find in the life of the Holy mother.



Her teachings were very simple. She was not educated but she was a living divinity, a living motherliness. Her representation of the manifestation of motherhood of God, that Sri Ramakrishna said: you will represent motherhood of God, and she lived that way. She said that the natural course of mind is going down like the water flows downward. The same water goes downwards, taken up by the heat and rays of the Sun. Similarly, our mind, which has a natural flow towards downside, can go upwards, can be elevated by the power of the prayer and repetition of God's holy name. Keeping our minds high, keeping our morals high, keeping our devotion intact was all Holy mother's teaching were. She lived a life centered on God. She used to repeat God's name 100,000 times everyday. There was no moment when she didn't remember God but at the same time, she was a great active person cooking, feeding, looking after her disciples, devotees, guests, and when people came to village from metropolitan city of Kolkata she used to go from village to village, home to home in search of milk because there were habituated in drinking tea. She would procure everything that her children needed. Such a great love she had for everyone according to their needs. In her, we find everything blended harmoniously and she said, my child, if you want peace of mind, don't find fault with others, don't judge anyone, love all, make everyone your own, make the whole world your own, then only you will have peace of mind and for that, how can we do that? Love all.

How to love all? As she loved all. We can pray to her, Mother, make us love all as you love all of us and her love was not limited to human beings only. One night, there was a calf of a cow crying in a place in the village. She rushed to that place, nobody else heard that. She went there and the calf was hungry. She let the calf drink cow's milk. One person was a little rude and he used to punish a cat, which used to steal things. Holy mother was coming from the village to Kolkata and she called that person and said, "Please treat this cat lovingly, do you know why? Because I am in that cat." After that, he never ill-treated the cat. The Holy mother harmonized human beings, animals, and everyone.

She used to say everyone should be given food. The few foods that can be consumed by human beings should be used by them. If they are not able to consume that food it may be given to cattle. What cannot be given to cattle can be given to dogs and stray cats. What is not useful for them, can be thrown in the ponds, and will be eaten by fish. She had taken care of every living being.

One lady, after sweeping the courtyard, threw the broomstick in the corner. Holy mother said, why did you throw it? You should go and gently keep it there. You should give respect even to the things that we use. They also need respect; if you respect them they will also respect you. They will last longer. Your heart will be filled with love for every being and every thing; that was Holy Mother's love.

When the Holy mother herself said once, if you have any problem, any difficulty, just say to yourself - I have a mother and you will feel I am there to help you. Whoever had said, Mother, I am in this difficulty, how should I overcome it? There is no example that she hasn't heard even in present times. I know the monks and devotees who were in difficulties and just remembered the mother

what to do, this is the situation and the next moment the solution comes, what they needed comes, that power is Holy Mother.

Once a little girl came to Holy mother and mother was going to Jayarambati, she asked that little naughty girl, who was her disciple, her name was Kusum Bala. She said, Holy mother asked her, Kusum, do you love me? She said, yes, mother. When I am gone to Jayarambati, do you still love me? Yes, mother. How much will you love? I love you this much, she stretched her both hands towards its end but how will I know that you will love me? Then the girl was clever, she asked Holy Mother, Maa, what should I do for you to know that I love you most dearly. She said, if you love me dear, then you have to love everyone in your household then I will know that you love me.

Loving the Holy mother is loving all. Jesus said, love your neighbor as thyself, love God in the same breath he said. Love the Holy Mother and Holy Mother's loving expression will be fulfilled when we love everyone till then we are not able to love God, love Holy mother. When we are at any conflict, any friction, any frustration, any hopelessness, just we have to say - I have a mother. Just we have to say to Holy Mother, the symbol of harmony, the symbol of hope and strength and fearlessness, symbol of motherly love, Mother - please be with me and take care of me. Mother is sure to come to help us.

May Mother, the symbol of harmony of everything, symbol of unity of the whole world, bless us to love yourself, to love each other without any distinction, love every human being, love every living being in this planet, love everything in this planet, love this whole universe as our own self as God himself as Holy mother herself.

Thank you very much.





## The Message of Harmony Through Service to Humanity

Swami Chandrashekharananda  
Head, Vedanta Society of Portland

*Advaya tattva samahita chittam  
Projjovala bhakti patavrita vrittam  
Karma kalevaram adbhuta chestam  
yami gurum sharanam bhava vaidyam*

I take refuge at my Guru, the man God, the physician for the malady of this relative temporary existence, whose mind ever dealt on the non-dualistic Truth, who covered himself with brilliant cloth of Supreme devotion, wonderfully and superhumanly ever active for the good of humanity.

My Salutations to all senior monks and love to our younger brothers, distinguished guests speakers, and dear devotees. Let us feel that we all are children of the Divine Mother. I am grateful to Swami Ishatmanandaji Maharaj for his kind invitation to be part of this great august congregation in this Home of Harmony.

My topic today is *The Message of Harmony Through Service to Humanity*. In a healthy human being the blood should be equitably distributed in all the organs of the body. Similarly, in an ideal character Karma (activity), Dhyana (meditation) Jnana (knowledge) and Bhakti (devotion). There should be the harmonious growth in human being.

Harmony is the principle of unity in diversity. It is the point of summit, culmination of all search. Everyone is creating and in the sum total of all these creations you have the universe unity in diversity. It is one and it is many at the same time. The highest point in every science was reached when it found the one unity underlying all variety. On the other hand we find harmony in the Nature.

Sri Ramakrishna, once was explaining the tenets

of Gaudiya Vaishnavism as taught by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to Sanatana Goswami:

*jive dayä näme ruchi, vaishnava sevana,  
ihä chära dharmä nähi shuna sanätana*

O Sanatana, listen – there is no dharma other than compassion to living being, intense taste for the glorious name of God and service to devotees of God.

Nama Ruchi, name and the possessor of name are the same. In kali yuga God has incarnated as name. So one should repeat Gods names always

*kali-käle näma-rüpe kṛṣṇa-avatāra  
näma haite haya sarva-jagat-nistāra*

Whether you are sleeping, eating, or resting, always chant the name of Krishna. [Sri Chaitanya - bhagavat, Madhya -khandā, 28.28]

The ways to transform our sense of importance is to submit oneself to the highest reality, greed to generosity, arrogance to humility, vengeance to forgiveness. Connect with our Real Self.

Shivajnane Jiva Sevā – “jibe dayä”, Who are you to have compassion on Jiva. Sri Ramakrishna taught that day that service is to be performed not as compassion to the living being but as an offering to living God. Swami Vivekananda further expanded this and said I worship the living God whom ignorant call man/human.

Ramakrishna Order through its activities offers primary relief to the needy and suffering victims of natural and man-made calamities, medical care to the ailing people, Educational services and last but not least the spiritual education to the seekers “Be grateful to the man you help, think of him as God. Is it not a great privilege to be allowed to worship God by helping our fellow men?”

*Worship everything as God -- every form is His*

temple. All else is delusion. Always look within, never without. Look upon every man, woman and every one as God. You cannot help anyone, you can only serve: serve the children of the Lord, serve the Lord Himself, if you have the privilege.

There is but one Being which the ignorant call the world. When a man goes higher in knowledge, he calls the very same Being the world of thought I worship myself; and in worshipping myself, I worship you."

After so much austerity, I have understood this as the real truth— God is present in every jiva; there is no other God besides that, 'Who serves jiva, serves God indeed. We are the servants of that God who by the ignorant is called MAN.

May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands

of miseries, so that I may worship the only. God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls - and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship. After so much austerity, I have understood this as the real truth - God is present in every Jiva; there is no other God besides that. 'Who serves jiva, serves God indeed.'

You must give your body, mind and speech to 'the welfare of the world'. You have read - 'Matri Devo Bhava, Pitri Devo Bhava - Look upon your mother as God, look upon your father as God', but I say, 'daridra devo bhava, murkha devo bhava - the poor, the illiterate, the ignorant, the afflicted - let these be your God'. Know that service to these alone is the highest religion."



## The Concept of Harmony in the Symbol of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission

Swami Ishtananda

Head, Vedanta Center of St. Petersburg, Florida



Thank you for welcoming me. Respected Swamijis and my brother swamis, dear friends, devotees, I am very appreciative of Swami Ishatmanandaji all along for the wonderful job he is doing, and I appreciate all of you who could wait, your patience is wonderful. I won't disappoint you, I will keep my talk as short as possible. The talk I was assigned to give today is the concept of harmony in the symbol of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. As you have already been informed from the very beginning, our message from the general secretary, the highest executive in our organization is that Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission is a house of harmony of all faiths and all people. This

was a wonderful gift from Swami Vivekananda to the entire humanity -- this organization. From the inception of this organization, people were not only welcome, but encouraged to live their own life, pray in their own language, and connect with the ultimate in all possible ways.

So people came from all possible backgrounds, ethnicities, faith and all different diversities you can think of. Our organization is a very small organization and it is expanding, so to reach out to the rest of the world, it will take some time. May be some centuries or more. But this place, this Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission itself is a home of harmony. Already some of our previous speakers and Swamis, they have very eloquently and in a wonderful way they have explained this point. So Swami Vivekananda gave this wonderful gift to us. And as you know, there

are very famous painters and authors and poets who could put a whole lot of thought and whole lot of ideas in a brief manner, and the symbolism of this organization is one of those marvelous things. Like within a small image, in a picture, the whole idea has been put in a capsule form, and it is a beautiful picture, which is the symbol of harmony of all faiths and all religion.

As Swami Vivekananda explained, basically there are four different ways that people can worship or connect the individual soul to the supreme, and they have been given these four general names as yogas: Bhakti, Jnana, Karma and Raja or Kundalini Yoga many names are given. These are the four different ways people could try to rise, unite with the supreme. And all of them have been put in one small image, and that was also given by Swami Vivekananda, this is also another gift, wonderful gift. In a small place, this gift is about four yogas. In that symbol it is seen that there is a lake and the lake is not a peaceful water, wavy lake. And there is a beautiful fully open, blossomed lotus on that water. And there is the sun rising in the horizon, and everything has been encircled with a serpent image. And in the middle, there is a swan. It looks very peaceful and very pleasant. At the bottom there is a message from the vedic literature, therefore it is a mantra. It says "*Tanno hamsa prachodayaat*". Now this is all about the symbol. This is the symbol, which

encapsulates the whole idea of what we stand for, the entire organization.

Swami Vivekananda himself explained it. He said "*the wavy water is the ever active, our karma, the life*". So it is the symbol of Karma Yoga. The lotus is the symbol of Bhakti, devotion, the path of Bhakti. The rising sun is the symbol of knowledge, the Jnana Yoga. And the serpent is the awakened Kundalini power, it is the symbol of Yoga or the Raja Yoga or the meditation. Swami Vivekananda himself in another place has explained that either using one or more or all of these yogas, try to realize that supreme truth yourself and be free. This is all about your practicing religion. Religion is all about it, and all our religious leaders today have spoken in this area. So when that is happening, then the swan, which is the representative of the Supreme Self, that is then realized. And the vedic mantra that is inscribed in the bottom, it is the prayer. The prayer is that let it inspire us to realize that swan. The supreme truth of the Self, and be free. So within this small but beautiful symbol, in a picture form, Swami Vivekananda himself, did it, though he was not known as an artist. He gave us this wonderful symbolism and imagery of the entire concept of why he had started this spiritual organization of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

Thank you very much.



Ribbon cutting  
May 21, 2022

## Travelogue: China (Part 02)

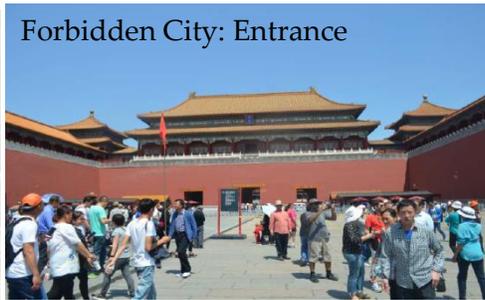
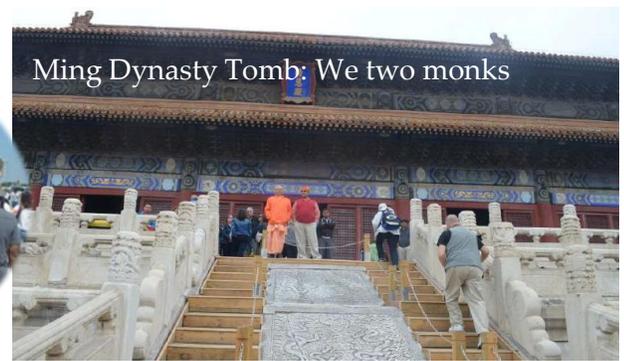
Swami Ishatmananda along with Debasish, Abhijeet, Arup

Beijing (continuation from the last issue): The next day we started our tour with a visit to a jade factory. We saw examples of intricate Chinese handicrafts with very expensive displays of artifacts. Then we went to visit the Great Wall of China. It is a series of fortifications made of stone, brick, earth, wood, etc., generally built along an east-to-west line across the historical northern borders of China to protect the Chinese states and empires against the raids and invasions of the various nomadic groups of the Eurasian steppe. Parts of the wall included watch towers, troop barracks, garrison stations, signaling capabilities through the means of smoke or fire. The path along the Great Wall also served as a transportation corridor. Several walls were being built as early as the 7th century BCE; these, later joined together and made bigger and stronger, are now collectively referred to as the Great Wall. Especially famous is the wall built 220–206 BCE by Qin Shi Huang, the first Emperor of China. Little of that wall remains. Since then, the Great Wall has

on and off been rebuilt, maintained, and enhanced; the majority of the existing wall is from the Ming Dynasty. Other purposes of the Great Wall have included border control, allowing the imposition of duties on goods transported along the silk road, regulation of trade and the control of immigration.

When we reached the Great Wall, it started drizzling. But that could not dampen our spirits. We saw the wall over the surrounding mountains from a high vantage point. It is testament to the great energy and effort of the Chinese people through history.

Then we headed for the Ming Tombs. It is a cluster of 13 tombs from the Ming dynasty only one of which has been excavated. The structures are mostly made of wood and in quite pristine conditions for thousand year old structures. We saw many of the Ming items displayed in the museum. palace from Ming dynasty (1420 to 1912). Total of 24 Emperors lived there and it was called the City of Emperors. The palace has 9000 rooms on 72 hectare ground surrounded by 26 ft high and



28 ft wide wall and is completely surrounded by a 65 ft wide moat outside the wall. The buildings are mostly wooden structures built in traditional Chinese Palatial architecture. The palace was completely inaccessible to outsiders. On the other hand, the palace women lived in the interior portion and never allowed out. In special occasions like Emperor's birthdays, chosen dignitaries were allowed in the outer courtyard. The last emperor was a little boy. His story has been recorder in the movie The Last Emperor.

We entered through the main entrance and reached the outer courtyard where the ceremony guests were received. Then we moved into the inner buildings and courtyards. We also visited the Palace Museum where some inner decorations are preserved. The large, expansive structures were very impressive and quite unlike any other palaces I visited before. Next we drove to the other end of town to a lovely area of parks and lakes near the Summer Palace gate.

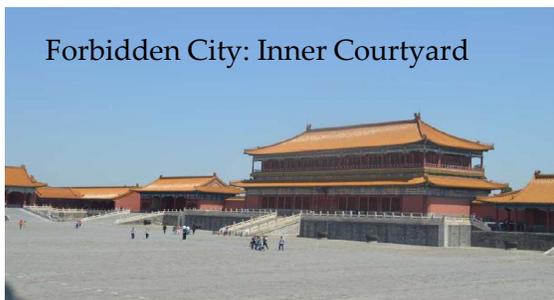
The Summer Palace originally built by Emperor Wu (141-187 BCE), The Qianlong Emperor in 1749 wanted to build a palace in the Kunming Lake area to celebrate the 60th birthday of his mother, Empress Dowager Chongqing. So he ordered the area expanded and beautified as a water-works project. The Summer Palace construction was complete in 1764 at a cost of over 4.8 million silver

coins. Mainly dominated by Longevity Hill and Kunming Lake it covers 1.1 sq mi, three-quarters of which is water. Longevity Hill is about 200 feet high and has many buildings positioned in sequence. The central Kunming Lake covers 540 acres. The Emperor never lived here himself.

There is a 728 meters long corridor between the lake and the palace grounds in the Summer Palace was built by Qianlong Emperor so that his mother could enjoy a leisurely walk out of the elements. We took a walk there and used some photo opportunities.

Incidentally, we mate one Chimes flute musician who was basking there. He played some Chinese music at my request. It became a part of my memory of that place.

The next day, was our last day in Beijing. First we set out to the Temple of Heaven which is a medieval complex of religious buildings situated in the southeastern part of central Beijing. The complex was visited by the Ming and Qing Emperors for annual ceremonies of prayer to Heaven for good harvest. Heaven worship predates the Tao period and is a testimonial of importance placed on agriculture by Chinese Emperors. The temple complex was constructed from 1406 to 1420 during the reign of the Yongle Emperor, who was also responsible for the construction of the Forbidden City in Beijing. The



Forbidden City: Inner Courtyard



Forbidden City: Palace Museum



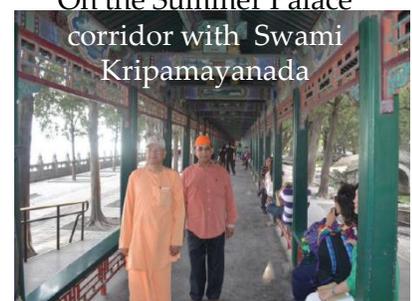
Chinese Musician: Playing flute on our request



Near Summer Palace entrance



Summer Palace



On the Summer Palace corridor with Swami Kripamayanada

Temple of Heaven: The main prayer hall is visible with two adjoining halls



complex was extended and renamed Temple of Heaven during the reign of the Jiajing Emperor in the 16th century. This was the last large-scale renovation of the temple complex in imperial times.

The temple is worthy of being an imperial temple with the grandeur and vastness reminding of the Forbidden City structures. The main hall of prayer is a magnificent triple-gabled circular building with three levels of marble stone base. It is a wooden building built without any use of nails. There is also a circular mound altar which is standing in perfect shape for last 500 years. There are also three big halls. We went up the main prayer hall and checked the beautiful interior decorations.

Our next stop was the Capital Museum. It is an art museum with modern architecture holding a very large collection of imperial artifacts. Beyond

the beautiful artefacts, one distinguishing feature of the building is the Bronze Exhibition Hall, which has an oval-shape, was meant to symbolize the unearthing of ancient relics by its slanting design which extends from the ground to the exterior of the museum. We walked around appreciating the artworks and then I concluded the visit by signing the guestbook. On our way back to hotel, we also visited Beijing Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). TCM can be viewed as a Chinese counterpart of Indian Ayurveda. The big difference is the use of animal parts in TCM, which is mostly absent in Ayurveda. In the hospital, the doctors examined our pulse and prescribed treatment.

It was 12<sup>th</sup> May, and it was the time to say good bye to China. We left our hotel and headed to the airport to the Beijing airport to be back to Chicago.

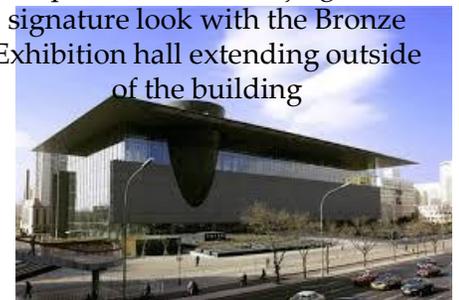
Capital Museum, Beijing: I posed for a photo on the stairs with a Chinese boy



Capital Museum, Beijing: The intricately painted interior



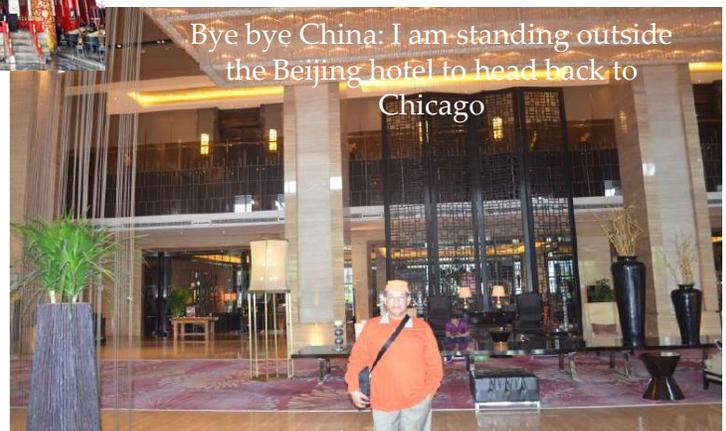
Capital Museum, Beijing: The signature look with the Bronze Exhibition hall extending outside of the building



Capital Museum, Beijing: The beautiful Chinese paintwork



Bye bye China: I am standing outside the Beijing hotel to head back to Chicago



## BHAGAVATA (16): SAT-KARYA-VAAD OF SRI KAPILA

*Swami Ishatmananda*

The 3<sup>rd</sup> book, 26<sup>th</sup> chapter describes the mystery of birth. The closeness of Purusha creates an agitation in Prakriti and Mahat (all-comprehending entity).

But Purusha, the Supreme Consciousness is not involved in anything.

Our last discussion ended with this question. The answer has been given in the 1st verse of Chapter 27.

Though the Supreme Being, even on being located (as if associated) in Prakriti is in reality unaffected because of its real nature, which is without any change, without active agency and without any quality.

The association is like the reflection of the sun in the water. No change happens to the real sun with the flow or the waves of the water.

If the consciousness, Purusha, is not involved, then who says, "I am the doer", "I am enjoying", "I am suffering."? Who is this Jiva?

The great ascetic Kapila said, "When the Purusha is influenced by the qualities of Prakriti, he becomes overwhelmed by egoism (ahamkara) or consciousness of the self and thinks himself to be the "Creator".

A little bit of confusion!! Kapila said purusha is unattached then again he said that is associated with Prakriti? Let us summarize the whole thing once again.

Purusha, the Pure Consciousness is never connected with Prakriti, the divine power of Purusha.

When Prakriti comes close to Purusha, then the three special qualities of Prakriti became activated (Like irons behave when they come near a magnet). Different changes in Prakriti started creating different gross and subtle things.

The first creation of Prakriti is Mahat (the great principle) or Hiranyagarbha (the Golden Womb).

The Mahat, though cosmic in nature, has a psychological aspect, known as Buddhi or intellect.

Buddhi though material is the finest material and possesses qualities like—luminosity and reflectivity.

Mahat produces Ahamkara (Ego or 'I' sense).

Ahamkara has three aspects:

(a) Sattvika = Mind; 5 organs of knowledge, 5

organs of action

(b) Rajasika = Helps both

(c) Tamasika = 5 Tanmatras & gross elements

Now we get the answer: When Purusha, Consciousness, comes close to Prakriti, It is reflected on the buddhi—the finest part of Mahat. That reflection activated the Ahamkara—the ego or 'I' sense. Basking in the reflected glory, the ego started thinking, "I am the Doer". As an example it is said --

A bullock cart pulled by two strong bulls was going. A dog was also walking on the same road. When the shadow of the bull covered the dog, it started thinking, "Oh look at me, I am so strong pulling this heavy load. — Who will stop him!!

*prakṛiteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśhaḥ  
ahankāra-vimūḍhātmā kartāham iti manyate.*

(Gita 3.27)

Ego, deluded by the qualities of prakriti started thinking, "I am doing", when in reality, Prakriti performs all actions.

When we touch something that sensation goes to our mind, and 'Buddhi' decides what it is—That is the way we learn.

Do we always get correct knowledge? No! Tulsidas thinking a hanging snake was a rope he climbed to his wife's room.

Our minds are capable of great illusions—even in the waking stage. Oh, think about the dream stage.

What happens when Buddhi and Ahamkara get entangled with Prakriti? (3/27/3)

Through the identification with Prakriti, the Jiva becomes helpless and miserable and gets involved in the cycle of birth and death through embodiment in high (godly), middle (human) and low species according to the effect of karma.

So, is there a way out? What is the process of going beyond this birth and death cycle?

In the 5th verse Kapila gave the hints—To gain liberation, the mind has to be slowly drawn away from this involvement with nature (Prakriti) & its evolutes — the objects of the senses — and united with the Supreme Being through one-pointed devotion (*bhakti yogena tibrena*) and detachment (*cha virktaa*).

## Introduction to the Cover Page :: *Dance As The Flow Of Time*

*Brahmacharini Jagaddhatri  
Sarada Convent  
Vedanta Society of Southern California*

Time flows dancing with joy. One Gregorian calendar year merged delightfully in a new one. This joyful forward movement of time is as smooth as dance. In this cover story dance is revisited as the expression of spirituality. Whenever these two words – dance and spirituality -- come side by side, the image of Nataraja Shiva will appear in the minds of many especially in the hearts of those who are aspirants of both disciplines.

The image on the cover (Courtesy: Wikimedia) is a dynamic sculpture of Lord Shiva as a dancer or Nataraja and was created between 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Century CE in the Badami caves of India. Here Nataraja has eighteen arms, he stands on a pedestal, while Lord Ganesh, like a child, tries to imitate his father. Nandi, the bull, stands quietly as though nothing is happening. A drummer beats the rhythmic patterns of the music. Each arm of the Lord is shown in motion. It is a continuous narrative, as it were. The flaying arms capture the fast movement, the rhythm of the dance.

“Art Treasures of India” provided a philosophical interpretation this image: *“It is dance which represents the whirling universe: it turns and twists, it moves and swirls. It is still yet in movement. The universe dances to Time (the drummer). But a sense of calmness pervades with a sense of wisdom (Lord Ganesh). However, through life, through its ups and downs, Nature is unmoved (Nandi, the bull).”*

However, this is not one of ancient images of dance. If one wishes to trace the beginning of dance in human civilization, it would go to prehistoric era – since that time dancing has been used to create bonding and communication. Scientists believe that early humans who were coordinated and rhythmic could have had an evolutionary advantage. A study published in the Public Library of Science’s genetics journal in 2006

suggested that long ago the ability to dance was actually connected to the ability to survive.

They find the answers to why we dance and why some people are better dancers than others -- the researchers examined the DNA of a group of dancers and non-dancers and found that the dancers shared two genes associated with a predisposition for being good social communicators. In addition, the dancers were found to have higher levels of serotonin, known to boost moods in humans and mice.

However, other than humans, animals -- monkeys, apes, birds and even sea lions all move in time to music. Researchers also say these animals can hear and understand audible rhythms while others, like bonobos, can even reproduce it by drumming with sticks.

Early humans might have danced to attract a mate, as far back as 1.5 million years ago, according to the archaeologist Mithen of United Kingdom, though the first evidence of a cave painting showed up in much later period. Here, a 20,000-Year-Old Cave Art from Borneo Depicts Humans Dancing (By Richard Conniff [strangebehaviors.wordpress.com](http://strangebehaviors.wordpress.com)).



As it is mentioned just now, hearts craving communion caused the birth of this form of art – dance. No doubt the best communication is with one’s inner-self. And the way to inner communion

is spirituality.

Religion and spirituality often go side by side. Therefore, let's briefly look at what major faith-based systems think about dance.

Dance has long been used by Jews as a medium for the expression of joy and other communal emotions. Dancing is a favorite pastime and plays a role in religious observance.

Early Buddhism had a negative attitude towards music and dance; the Vinaya codes explicitly prohibit monks, nuns, and lay followers not only from performing, but also from listening or watching performances. This stance is still standard in Theravada Buddhism.

According to church leaders and early theologians such as Tertullian and Saint Augustine, dance incited idolatry, lust and damnation but Psalms 149:3 encourages the use of dancing to worship God: *"Let them praise his name with dancing!"*

In Islam spiritual dance is allowed but any dance that promotes sensual pleasure is forbidden (haram).

In Hinduism, dance is always considered as an expression of joy – may it be sensual enjoyment (*vishayananda*), religious ritual (*bhajananda*) or spiritual bliss of internal communion (*brahmananda*). One of the ancient treatises on performing arts is Natya-shastra. The exact date of this composition is unknown but evidence suggests that the sage Bharata may have composed it in the 1st millennium BCE, and it expanded over a long period of time. The purpose of this text is clear from its very beginning, *"entertainment is a desired effect of performance arts but not the primary goal, and that the primary goal is to transport the individual in the audience into another parallel reality, full of wonder, where they experience the essence of their own consciousness."*

Lord Shiva is the first yogi who is considered as the King of Dance. The whole cosmos is dancing in the rhythm of Nataraja Shiva and getting free from all bondages. As expressed in Rabindranath Tagore's poem, *"Let my shackles snap at every step of*

*thy dance, O Nataraja'*. Through his poetic eyes, he could see, from the atomic level to infinity – everything is absorbed in the same consciousness, *"Rebellious atoms break into beauteous form at thy dance-time,*

*the suns and planets -- anklets of light – twirl around thy moving feet,*

*and, age after age, things struggle*

*to wake from dark slumber, through*

*pain of life into consciousness,*

*and the ocean of thy bliss*

*breaks out in tumults of suffering and joy.*

*I salute thee,*

*Let thy mighty dance feel my heart."* (Translation by Samar Sen).

Nataraja Shiva's dance is mainly known as Tandava. It is considered the first form of "dance" ever. There are different types of Tandavas based on the mood, namely Ananda Tandava, Rudra Tandava, and the like. Natya Shastra has chapters on this subject.

The dance of Nataraja opened a new dimension in Sanskrit grammar. About 2700 years ago, Panini a not-so-smart student went to a teacher. The teacher was not happy with Panini's performance. So as per the teacher's suggestion he went to the Himalayas to do penance. Lord Shiva was pleased with his prayer and was ready to give him whatever he wanted. Panini asked the Lord to bestow him knowledge in language. Shiva was very happy started to dance. His kettle drum boomed and with his total focus on that sound Panini could get only 14 beats from the drum called 'Damaruka' in Sanskrit. Based on the fourteen sounds he wrote a Sanskrit grammar book known as Eight (Ashta) Chapters (Adhyayi). It contains 3959 Sutras (formulas), without wasting a single space. Free from any gap or incoherency this grammar built a strong foundation of Sanskrit language.

Shiva is also known as the God of destruction. Dances of Brahma, the creator God or of Vishnu primarily the God of sustenance is not known. However, when Vishnu assumed the Mohini (an

enchancing lady) form or appeared in Krishna form, he danced. Krishna danced Raasa (dance of meditation) with the cowherd boys and the milkmaid ladies of Vrindavan. He did Tandava dance after killing the venomous snake Kaliya. Other Gods like Ganesha, etc. are also famous for Tandava dance.

Raasa Dance with Krishna



Krishna on Kaliya

In the path of devotion, music and dance often take special positions to manifest the mood of the aspirant. Beginning from Sri Chaitanya, Meera and others demonstrated this repeatedly. Sri Chaitanya used to dance in procession while Meera's offerings to her beloved Lord Krishna were mainly solo. Sri Ramakrishna had a mystic vision of Sri Chaitanya kirtan (singing aloud the songs of the Lord's name and divine sports).

The Great Master described it elaborately, "He witnessed that, absorbed in the love of God, Gauranga, the moon of Navadvip, was proceeding with a slow gait in the centre with Nityananda and Advaita on either side, surrounded by a dense multitude. They were all in a state of spiritual inebriation produced by His love, some expressing the bliss of their hearts by losing control over themselves and others by wild ecstatic dances."

Before the birth of the Master his mother felt as if a light wave from Shiva entered her womb. Sri Ramakrishna's father had a vision of Vishnu saying he is coming as his son. Therefore in the dance of Sri Ramakrishna the beauty of Knowledge shown by Shiva and self-surrender of Bhakti shown by the incarnations of Vishnu got merged together.

Sri Ramakrishna told his devotees, when he was doing spiritual practices remaining absorbed in the mood of baby Ramachandra: "I actually saw — just as I see you before me — that Ramlala accompanied me dancing, now preceding, now following me."

Devotee Manimohan came to Sri Ramakrishna for consolation after losing his son. Sri Ramakrishna said a few words to pacify his grief and described how the death of his relative Akshay touched him. He said, "Akshay died. I felt nothing at the time. I was standing and was witnessing how man dies. I saw there was, as it were, a sword in a sheath and the sword was brought out of it. The sword was not at all affected. It remained as it was and the sheath lay there. I felt great joy to see it. I laughed and sang and danced."

The people of Kamarpukur village realized no one had a sweet voice like Gadadhar — baby Sri Ramakrishna. No matter whether men, women or children, all enjoyed his company.

When he had grown up, he came to Dakshineswar as the priest of Kali temple, Hriday — nephew of Gadadhar, recollected during the worship his uncle: "... left the worshipper's seat, and ascending the altar caressed the divine Mother by affectionately touching Her chin and began singing, laughing, joking, and conversing with Her ; or, sometimes, he caught hold of Her hands and danced.... "



A painting of Sri Chaitanya in Kirtan by Kailash raj  
Photo courtesy: bhaktinomoney.s pace

Swami Saradananda wrote that Sri Ramakrishna, at the beginning of his Sadhaka life *"spent some time in the mood of a woman to satisfy an urge to develop this aspect of his dual personality. Looking upon himself as the eternal female companion of the universal Mother, he applied himself wholly for a pretty long time to Her service. He would adorn and decorate Her ..., fan Her with a Chamara to cool Her person, and sing and dance before Her in a woman's dress for Her satisfaction."*

Sri Ramakrishna himself used to dance with the strength of a lion and went into samadhi and many times inspired devotees to dance by saying, *"Raise, both your arms and dance uttering Hari, again and again."* The writer of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, M remembered, seeing the Master dance, the devotees stood up. But M did not. Sri Ramakrishna caught hold of M.'s hand and said: *"Don't be foolish! Dance!"* Mahimacharan was a student of philosophy. That day he too had chanted the name of Hari and danced during the kirtan. This made the Master very happy.

The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna describes an indescribable scene. Sri Ramakrishna was dancing. He was intoxicated with divine love. Many times he went into samadhi. He stood still, his eyes fixed, his face beaming, with one hand on the shoulder of a beloved disciple. Coming down a little from the state of ecstasy, he danced again like a mad elephant. Regaining consciousness of the outer world, he improvised lines to the music: *Mother, dance about Thy devotees! Dance Thyself and make them dance as well.*

*Mother, dance in the lotus of my heart; Dance, Thou the ever blessed Brahman! Dance in all Thy world-bewitching beauty.*

The exquisite and celestial dance of a child completely filled with ecstatic love of God and identified heart and soul with the Divine Mother!

Dance was a service for him to God. One day he told the devotees: *"God can be served in different ways. An ecstatic lover of God enjoys Him in different ways. Sometimes he says, 'O God, You are the lotus and I am the bee', and sometimes, 'You are the Ocean of*

*Satchidananda and I am the fish.'* Sometimes, again, the lover of God says, *'I am Your dancing-girl.'* He dances and sings before Him."

Best of all Sri Ramakrishna's disciple Swami Vivekananda, then Naren, was an excellent singer. M describes, *"As Narendra sang the line, "Dance in delight with hands upraised, chanting Lord Hari's holy name", the Master said to him, "Sing that line twice."*

*Full of divine ecstasy, Narendra sang again and again the lines:*

*Thou dancest in the Lotus of the Heart, Mother, Eternal Consort of Brahman!*

*Sri Ramakrishna was dancing, drunk with divine love, and he sang again and again, "O Mother, Eternal Consort of Brahman!"*

*After dancing a long time Sri Ramakrishna resumed his seat. He was very much pleased to see Narendra in a spiritual mood, singing with tears in his eyes.*

When Swami Saradananda first met Sri Ramakrishna, the Master was about 49 years old. Within two years he left his body. He found the Master's body and mind always filled with bliss, and like a boy of five, danced and sang Mother's name on some special days like the day of the worship of Phalaharini Puja. *All were charmed gazing at the unprecedented beauty of his face. They were, moreover, experiencing in their hearts, various wonderful divine emotions by virtue of the company of the god-man.*

Balaram Bose, a lay devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, used to organize the chariot festival at his home where the devotees would pull the chariot forward to the accompaniment of kirtan. The Master would join in the singing and dancing. About this wonderful sight of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Saradananda wrote, *"Pleased with the pure devotion of the Sattoika family, Jagannath Himself, the Lord of the universe, was manifested in the image on the chariot and in the body of Sri Ramakrishna."*

It is not only Saradananda; Lakshmi Devi, a niece and disciple of Sri Ramakrishna also saw the Master as Lord Jagannath. She identified herself with the heroic god Balarama, and putting on a male attire she danced just like him.

One of her disciples, Bipin, reports that when Lakshmi Devi lived in a cottage with her brothers at Dakshineswar, he one day saw her dance and sing heroically like Balarama, lost in her own spiritual mood and oblivious of the outsiders who flocked there to witness the ecstatic mood. In fact, she had a taste for these things and became adept in them even from an early age. She used to say later, 'How can I help it - I am born a woman. If I were a man, I would show what a kirtana really is.'

Sri Ramakrishna met one of famous dancers of 19<sup>th</sup> century Calcutta Nati Binodini. Nati means dancer or actress. She played the lead role in a drama based on Sri Chaitanya's early life. On 21 September 1884 Sri Ramakrishna came to the Star Theatre in Calcutta to see this religious play. After the show Sri Ramakrishna praised her performance and touched her head with the words: "Be illumined".

Many times it is found how the Master would take care of the devotees dancing for the Lord – even if it is their profession. For instance at Panihati festival Navachaitanya was dancing in spiritual mood and the Master was caring for him.

The spiritual leader of Brahma Society, Keshab Chandra Sen was very close to Sri Ramakrishna. Later the Master recalled, "Yes. I also told him about the Chidakasa, the Inner Consciousness, and about many other things. Oh, how happy we were! We used to sing and dance together."

The whole of creation is dancing like as puppets dance well on a stage when pulled by a wire. The power belongs to God. A manifestation of open-mindedness is to dance freely. Pointing out his all-accepting nature the Master said: "I don't press my arm to my side. Both my hands are free. I am not afraid of anything. I accept both the Nitya and the Lila, both the Absolute and the Relative." Sri Ramakrishna shows how this one-sidedness is related to one's self interest through an excellent parable: "Listen to a story. Once a woman went to see her weaver friend. The weaver, who had been spinning different kinds of silk thread, was very happy to see her friend and said to

her: 'Friend, I can't tell you how happy I am to see you. Let me get you some refreshments.' She left the room. The woman looked at the threads of different colours and was tempted. She hid a bundle of thread under one arm. The weaver returned presently with the refreshments and began to feed her guest with great enthusiasm. But, looking at the thread, she realized that her friend had taken a bundle. Hitting upon a plan to get it back, she said: 'Friend, it is so long since I have seen you. This is a day of great joy for me. I feel very much like asking you to dance with me.' The friend said, Sister, I am feeling very happy too.' So the two friends began to dance together. When the weaver saw that her friend danced without raising her hands, she said: 'Friend, let us dance with both hands raised. This is a day of great joy.' But the guest pressed one arm to her side and danced raising only the other. The weaver said: 'How is this, friend? Why should you dance with only one hand raised? Dance with me raising both hands. Look at me. See how I dance with both hands raised.' But the guest still pressed one arm to her side. She danced with the other hand raised and said with a smile, 'This is all I know of dancing.'"

There are many situations when Sri Ramakrishna used dance as an example to make dry, hard concepts of philosophy lucid. Here are some gems from the vast ocean of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.

"There are two kinds of meditation, one on the formless God and the other on God with form. But meditation on the formless God is extremely difficult. In that meditation you must wipe out all that you see or hear. You contemplate only the nature of your Inner Self. Meditating on His Inner Self, Shiva dances about. He exclaims, 'What am I! What am I!' This is called the Shiva yoga'. While practising this form of meditation, one directs one's look to the forehead. It is meditation on the nature of one's Inner Self after negating the world, following the Vedantic method of 'Neti, neti'. "There is another form of meditation, known as the 'Vishnu yoga', The eyes are fixed on the tip of the nose. Half the look is directed inward and the other half outward. This is how one meditates on God with form. Sometimes

*Shiva meditates on God with form, and dances. At that time he exclaims, 'Rama! Rama!' and dances about."* Swami Brahmananda's photograph is a good example of such eyes.



Sri Ramakrishna said many times that the heart of a devotee is the abode of the Lord. *"Rama said to Lakshmana, 'Brother, if you see in a man ecstatic love of God, if he laughs, weeps, and dances in divine ecstasy, then know for certain that I dwell in him."* An appropriate example in support of this saying is described in the Great Master. Like the Brahmani, the Master's Guru, Gopal's mother also assumed sometimes the attitude of Yasoda and the Master in the attitude of Gopala sat on her lap. Swami Saradananda has recorded an eye-witness's testament in his book on the "Great Master". The devotee talked about a special day when she was *"completely astounded to see that state of Gopala's mother and the Master's mood. A little later, that mood of the Master came to an end and he got up and sat on his bedstead. But that mental attitude of Gopal's mother would not come to an end. Beside herself with joy, she stood up and walked dancing round the whole room, saying like one mad, 'Brahma dances, Vishnu dances' and so on. The Master saw it, smiled and said to me, 'Just see, she is completely filled with Bliss; her mind has now gone to the sphere of Gopala.' Gopala's mother had indeed such visions while in Bhava and she became a different person, as it were."*

Sri Ramakrishna used to joke with the dancers too. Vijay Goswami was initially a Brahmo devotee and later following his family tradition he became a great Vaishnav spiritual leader. People were charmed to see his joyous, unrestrained dance and frequent ecstasy under the influence of inspiration during Kirtan. One day as soon as the Master saw Vijay, he said jokingly, *"Vijay feels great delight in Sankirtan nowadays. But I am seized with fear when he*

*dances, for, the whole roof may crash. (All laughed.) Yes, such an event actually took place in our part of the country. People build second storey's of houses there with wood and mud only. A Goswami went to the house of one of his disciples and began singing Kirtan on the first floor. As soon as the atmosphere was created and the Kirtan became quite enjoyable, dancing began. Now, the Goswami was a little fat like you (looking towards Vijay), After he had danced for some time the roof gave way, and the Goswami descended plump to the ground floor! This is why I am afraid that your dancing might produce such an effect."* (All laughed.)

The direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna used to dance on various occasions. Swami Vivekananda learnt dancing and both instrumental and vocal music. Swami Brahmananda was Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual son and before his coming to Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna had a vision from which he knew this Rakhal is the real Rakhal of Vrindaban, the eternal playmate of Sri Krishna. Before giving up his body, one day Rakhal Maharaj said, *"Oh, where are my anklets? Let me go and dance with Krishna."* This saying made all who were present, realize what Sri Ramakrishna was! Other direct disciples used to say that Swami Brahmananda was then exactly like Sri Ramakrishna, even physically. After remaining in that mood for a long time Rakhal Maharaj came down, turned to the disciples and said, *"My Krishna is not the Kathor Krishna, my Krishna is not the hard Tapasvi Krishna, my Krishna is the 'Gopi-Krishna'."* These words expressed his whole life -- his boyish, childlike nature. His whole attitude towards life was that he was playing with it.

After Sri Ramakrishna gave up his body, the direct disciples also came together to live a monastic life at Baranagar. There they used to spend time with scriptural studies, meditation, bhajan etc.. M has described how Rakhal and Tarak danced with Narendra's newly composed the song: *There Siva dances, striking both His cheeks.*

This story began with Nataraja Shiva, who is also known as Mahakala. He is beyond all

dimensions including time. Therefore he is called Maha (the Great) Kala (Time or death). Another manifestation of this is the Divine Mother Kali. After describing her beauty in his “Kali the Mother” poem Swami Vivekananda invited her:

*For Terror is Thy name,  
Death is in Thy breath,  
And every shaking step  
Destroys a world for e'er.  
Thou "Time", the All-Destroyer!  
Come, O Mother, come!*

At the end of a year, some of us remember time that is gone and time is coming. This coming and going are like dancing waves on an ocean, which itself is calm, serene and eternal. This Eternity is verily the source of all joy. This eternal Reality alone is being celebrated through dance in various ways. Let's conclude with a description of the dance of Eternity from the Great Master:

*"The Master was dancing in the centre of that God-intoxicated assemblage, now going forward with rapid steps, now going backward in a similar way to the cadence of the music. Thus wherever he was going forward in any direction, the people there, as if enchanted, made room for his free movement.*

*An extraordinary divine light was playing on his smiling face all the while. A wonderful blending of extraordinary tenderness, sweetness and leonine strength was visible in every limb of the Master's body. That superb dance ! In it there was no ostentation, no jumping or hopping; no unnatural gestures of the limbs, no acrobatics ; nor was there to be noticed any absence of control. There were in it, the natural posture and movement of each limb as a gushing overflow of grace, bliss and sweetness surging from within, the like of which may be noticed in a large fish, long confined in a mud puddle, when it is suddenly let loose in a vast sheet of water — swimming in all directions, now slowly, now rapidly, and expressing its joy in diverse ways. It appeared as if the dance was the 'dynamic bodily expression of the surge of Bliss, the Reality of Brahman, he was experiencing' within. Thus dancing, sometimes he lost his normal consciousness, sometimes his cloth would slip, which ethers would fasten firmly round his waist. Again, sometimes seeing someone losing normal consciousness on account of the infusion of spiritual emotions, he touched his breast and brought him back to consciousness. It seemed that descending on him, a divine brilliant stream of Bliss was spreading on all sides and enabling true devotees to see God face to face.*



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<p align="center"><b>2023</b> Calendar of the <b>Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago</b></p> <p align="center">The Society revisits the journey of <b>Vedanta in North America</b> A Golden Link Between the World's Fair &amp; The Parliament of the World's Religions</p> <p>Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago, 14630 Lemont Road, Homer Glen, IL 60491 Vivekananda Retreat, 6723, 122nd Ave., Ganges, MI 49408 Home of Harmony, 3801 N Keeler Ave., Irving Park, Chicago, IL 60641</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:info@chicagovedanta.org">info@chicagovedanta.org</a> Website: <a href="http://chicagovedanta.org">chicagovedanta.org</a> Media: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/c/chicagovedanta">YouTube.com/c/chicagovedanta</a></p>	<p>World's Fairs continued to be conducted in the similar format of 1851 for the next 44 years. In 1893 the theme of the Fair was the World Columbian Exposition (celebration of 400 years of Columbus's discovery of America) organized in Chicago and this became the birthplace of a worldwide interfaith movement. The World's Parliament of Religions that took place during this fair was the first formal gathering of representatives of Eastern and Western spiritual traditions.</p> <p>Along with mainstream religions, it recognized both African Americans and women as religious leaders. An unprecedented number of 19 women spoke at this Parliament from various spiritual backgrounds. A captivating Hindu monk, Swami Vivekananda, addressed the assembled delegates. His declaration introduced Hinduism and the teachings of Vedanta to America.</p>   	<p>Since 1893 Chicago has celebrated in different ways this watershed event in American history. From Sept. 11, 2010, on the stairs adjacent to the original lecture site of 1893, the Art Institute of Chicago organized a year-long LED display of Swami Vivekananda's historic address.</p> <p>The Parliament has grown over a period of time and spread all over the country in the forms of local chapters. Alongside Vedanta Societies continue to move forward as well. Swami Ishatmananda Head of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago and also a trustee member of Parliament, founded the "Home of Harmony" – a place for intra and interfaith interactions following the footsteps of Vivekananda in Chicago.</p>  <p>In 2023, after 30 years of its independent formation, the Parliament of the World's Religions once again returns to the city of its birth – CHICAGO!</p> <p><b>A CALL TO CONSCIENCE: Defending Freedom &amp; Human Rights</b></p> <p>This Parliament will take place near the Art Institute &amp; Swamis from the Vedanta Societies &amp; will be attending. Interested? Visit: <a href="http://parliamentofreligions.org">parliamentofreligions.org</a></p> 
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