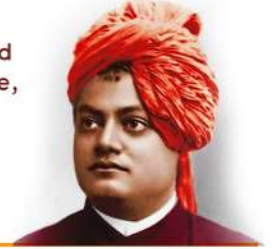




“Let the children of Shri Ramakrishna be true to themselves and everything will be all right. We may not live to see the outcome, but as sure as we live, it will come sooner or later.”

Swami Vivekananda



LOOKING INWARDS (Fathers are great)

We look up to our fathers right from our childhood. Our fathers appear larger than life, protective, all-knowing and kind to our innocent and admiring eyes. It is no wonder that our representations of the Almighty easily take the form of a father figure. Fathers are instrumental in moulding our personalities. A father with vision and self-belief helps the children believe in themselves and guides their chosen course of life. The legacy from our fathers defines us until the very end and great fathers are aware of the enormous them in responsibility they carry. In this issue our contributors have written loving tributes in honor of their fathers and the unforgettable wisdom they’ve passed on to them.

The Editorial Team

Sri Ramakrishna as a father, by Devasis Mukherjee from Gurugram

Sri Ramakrishna was a married man but did not live an ordinary householder’s life and therefore had no biological children of his own. Yet, he had a vision one day in which the Divine Mother (Kali) put an infant on his lap and said “This is your son”. Sri Ramakrishna was shocked, and replied – “What? Should I too have to become like an ordinary householder?” The Mother replied that this was no ordinary son, it was his spiritual son. This spiritual son of Sri Ramakrishna was Rakhhal, who later became Swami Brahmananda – the first president of the Ramakrishna order.

When Rakhhal’s newly wed wife came to visit Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna asked the Holy Mother to welcome her daughter in-law by presenting her with a Rupee when she met her – as was the custom. Soon Rakhhal came to live with Sri Ramakrishna in Dakshineswar. Thakur was very careful of Rakhhal’s upbringing. One day he asked Rakhhal, “Why can’t I look at your face today? Have you been telling a lie? Rakhhal remembered that he had indeed jokingly done so. Sri Ramakrishna was also very particular about Rakhhal’s spiritual progress. One day he asked him to massage his feet. When Rakhhal was not very keen, he told him “One gets immediate result of rendering service to a holy man”. A reluctant Rakhhal had just started massaging the feet when he saw a dark-complexioned young girl come running into the room with her anklets jingling. She ran thrice around the cot on which Sri Ramakrishna was resting and then merged into him. Sri Ramakrishna immediately smiled looking at Rakhhal and said “See, didn’t I tell you so?”



Swami Brahmananda (regarded as the spiritual son of Ramakrishna Paramahansa)

As his spiritual son Rakhhal had inherited his spiritual father’s wealth – renunciation, devotion, knowledge and all. Years after Sri Ramakrishna had passed away Swami Brahmananda was engaged in very austere penance in Vrindavan. When someone asked “Why do you do practice so much austerity? Hasn’t Thakur given you everything?” “True”, he replied, “He indeed has. But I must now make all that I have received, truly my own”.

Previous issues of VIVA newsletters (in both English and Hindi) can be accessed at <https://viva.rkmm.org/>



VOL No. 3. Issue No. 6 VIVA NEWSLETTER (ENGLISH MONTHLY)

Vivekananda Institute of Values (VIVA)

Practical Spirituality for All

Why my papa was special, by Sulakshna Rattan from Gurgaon

My Papa was special in many ways with a special life story of his own that I hold close to my heart. His mother died when he was only 5 years old. An uncle guided him to read, play games, and be self-reliant. He eventually became a voracious reader. There were millions of books at home on every subject. He introduced us to history, arts, architecture, scriptures, spirituality, religion, philosophy, museums, theatre, respect for nature and the animal world. Even self-defence!!! Papa taught us that work is worship, so to do our best was deeply instilled in us.

Born a Punjabi, his initial education was in Urdu, Persian and English. Still, Papa learnt Hindi and Sanskrit. A commercial pilot, papa learnt French, Italian, and Russian. He would frequently invite foreign passengers home. We were exposed to their ways and habits and learnt of their countries. Papa, a keen walker himself, took us for long walks through cities, in Bharat and abroad. A great swimmer, people would leave the pool, to watch him diving. I truly respect the multifaceted personality of my father and admire him for having given expression to his many myriad talents.

A few words on why my dad was special to me, by Devika Ramakrishnan from Chennai

My Dad, my Achan. No words are enough to express how special he was to me. He is the one reason I am alive, one reason I uphold my values in my life, and the one reason I became a strong woman. The upbringing he gave me and my sibling is invaluable to me. He brought us up, despite all adversities, as good human beings. He taught us never to be judgmental of others. He taught us to see the pain in others. He taught us to be compassionate, and more than anything, he taught us to laugh in the face of all the struggles we endured in our life. He stood tall among everyone, officially and personally and still lives in our hearts. I remember him as none as I breathe.

Echoes of My Father's Love, poem by Saswati Ghosh from Delhi

I seek my baba, here and there,
In shadows dark, in dreams laid bare.
I seek him where the stars do gleam,
Beneath the moon's soft, tranquil beam.

The birds that sing their morning tune,
Remind me of his laughter's boon,
It fades, yet in my heart remains,
A melody that soothes all my pains.

In the whispering winds, I hear his voice,
A gentle murmur, my heart's rejoice.
To guide me through the paths unknown,
With wisdom, love, strength always shown.

In every sunset's fiery glow,
I see his spirit, feel it flow,
Across the sky, a canvas wide,
Where he in eternity now resides.
In nature's every corner, there,
I search for him with silent prayer.

In every triumph, in every fear,
I feel his presence, always near.
His wisdom, now my guiding light,
Leads me through the darkest night.

In moments of sorrow, I find my way,
For you, dear baba, I'll never sway.
With head held high, I'll strive each day,
To make you proud in every way.

Not a single blow, no, not one,
Can shake the course I've begun.
Till we meet beyond this life's veil,
I'll fulfil my duty, without fail.

Vivekananda Institute of Values (VIVA)

Park Hospital Road, Sector 47, Gurugram 122018 ✉ values.viva@gmail.com



VOL No. 3. Issue No. 6 VIVA NEWSLETTER (ENGLISH MONTHLY)

Vivekananda Institute of Values (VIVA)

Practical Spirituality for All

ASK SWAMI SHANTATMANANDA

A reader writes:

My father has always been a difficult man and much more now with age. How do I develop my strength to love and serve him in his old age ?

Swami Shantatmananda replies:

There are several aspects to consider while answering this question. It is possible that your father loved you and thought that disciplining you is the best way to bring out the best in you? Perhaps that's what he has seen in his father's parenting style. Since you are more mature can you not accept that your father did what he thought best? Yes, as people get older, they do have certain demands which we find difficult. A spiritual attitude of understanding and accepting different perspectives and including even those who are 'difficult' will be needed. As we understand the interconnectedness of Prakriti, we will find it easy to forgive and include everyone in our fold. Even an intellectual understanding of the Advaitic idea of Oneness will help to some extent.

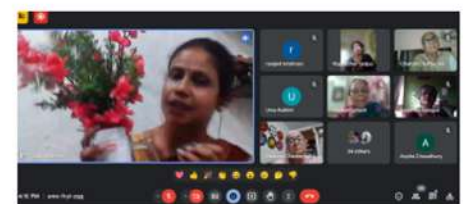
MOVEMENT – VIVA Events and Updates

• Youth Convention at VIVA: On May 4, 2024, a day long Youth Convention was held at VIVA. Nearly 127 youth marked their attendance and their participation turned it into a phenomenal success. Revered Swami Shantatmananda ji (VIVA in charge) and Swami Sarvapriyananda ji (Minister-in-Charge of Vedanta Society of New York, USA, also the keynote speaker at the Convention) provided insights and guidance to the youth on Vedanta and its practical application.



Youth Convention at VIVA

• Kalyani – The Awakened woman – VIVA started its weekly Kalyani series of (online) workshops for women for this year in the month of May. The workshops deal with themes of practical spirituality like self-belief, harmony, our nature, handling emotions and finding purpose. These workshops, with the Grace of the Holy Trio, have met with great success. We count our workshops as a success when we manage to touch the lives of our participants and set them on the path of self-discovery. One participant, Ms. Manju Bhamra testifies that “after attending last two sessions I've become so much more aware of my emotions... which is the first step towards self-improvement. Thank you so much for the sessions!” We remain eternally grateful.



Snapshots from the Kalyani sessions

Vivekananda Institute of Values (VIVA)

Park Hospital Road, Sector 47, Gurugram 122018 ✉ values.viva@gmail.com



VOL No. 3, Issue No. 6 VIVA NEWSLETTER (ENGLISH MONTHLY)

Vivekananda Institute of Values (VIVA)

Practical Spirituality for All

- Kalyani – The Awakened Woman (in Bengali) – In a first of its kind, a Kalyani workshop was held online in Bengali. Led by senior resource persons, the workshop was well received and participants requested more such workshops for women in the regional language.
- Principal's Orientation Workshop was held at the Sarala Birla Public School, Ranchi on May 6, 2024.
- Other Value Education Programs: Students from the Arth Foundation visited VIVA on May 12, 2024, for a two-hour value education program. Mr. Dharmendra Pandey led the workshop on developing self-confidence and overcoming fear.
- SVARAT – Living in Ananda: On May 17th, the 3rd session of the SVARAT workshop was held at the VIVA premises. The topic was 'Guru is greater than paras'. Our speaker, Mr. Devasis Mukherjee spoke about the importance of a Guru, as the transcendental Satchidananda in the form of a person who leads us from ignorance to light. The session was scholarly and illuminating for all present.



The online Kalyani session in Bengali



Revered Swami Shantatmanandaji Maharaj addressing the Principal's Workshop



Value Education program for the students of the Arth

Created by VIVA team
Digital services by



Vivekananda Institute of Values (VIVA)

Park Hospital Road, Sector 47, Gurugram 122018 ✉ values.viva@gmail.com