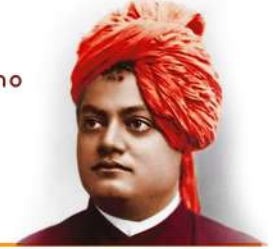




**Mother represents colourless love that knows no barter, love that never dies.**

**Swami Vivekananda**



**LOOKING INWARDS (The greatness of motherhood)**

Why do we feel parenthood in general and motherhood in particular is a spiritual journey? When a new baby is born, it places its entire trust upon its mother. The mother feels a complete oneness with the child and her motivations and ambitions usually become subordinate to what is best for the child. No sacrifice seems too much for her if it benefits the child. She learns to choose and demonstrate higher principles so that the child watches and replicates this ideal behaviour. We owe so much to our mothers– the facilitators of humane qualities, generation after generation, through their own example.

The Editorial Team

**Sarada Ma – Symbol of Universal Motherhood, by Anindita Mukherjee from Kolkatta**

Sri Sarada Devi, affectionately known as Sarada Ma, is celebrated for embodying the ideal of universal motherhood. Her life and teachings are a testament to the nurturing and inclusive spirit that defines motherhood at its most profound level.

Sarada Ma's concept of universal motherhood transcended the traditional roles associated with mothering. She was not just a mother to her biological family but to all who sought her wisdom and guidance. She often said, "I am the mother of the wicked, as I am the mother of the virtuous. Whenever you are in distress, just say to yourself 'I have a mother'". This statement reflects her unconditional love and acceptance, hallmarks of universal motherhood.

Sarada Ma was married to Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa ('Thakur') at a young age, but she joined him only when she turned 18. Despite the age difference and Sri Ramakrishna's intense spiritual pursuits, she supported him wholeheartedly, showcasing the nurturing aspect of motherhood. She was not only Thakur's wife but also his spiritual partner. He regarded her as a manifestation of the Divine Mother. In 1872, he ritualistically worshipped her as the Divine Mother, awakening the universal motherhood latent in her.



After Sri Ramakrishna's passing, Sarada Ma became a spiritual guide to his disciples. She was revered as 'Holy Mother' and provided them with advice and encouragement, fulfilling the role of a mother in a larger spiritual family. Her compassion was not limited to her immediate circle. She embraced all people without distinction, including those who had lived sinful lives, embodying the forgiving and accepting nature of motherhood. Her teachings often reflected the theme of universal motherhood. She taught that one could find the divine in every being, and by serving others selflessly, one could serve God, thus extending the maternal care to a broader humanity.

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



VOL No. 3. Issue No. 5 VIVA NEWSLETTER (ENGLISH MONTHLY)

## Vivekananda Institute of Values (VIVA)

### Practical Spirituality for All

Sarada Ma faced challenges in balancing her spiritual and maternal roles, which were intertwined with the societal and cultural context of her time. As a woman in the 19th century India, she had to navigate the expectations placed on her by society, which often conflicted with her spiritual pursuits. Due to precarious financial situation, she managed the household needs with limited resources, all the while ensuring everyone's needs were met with. Her ability to provide maternal care to her extended spiritual family displayed her immense inner strength and adaptability.

The Holy Mother demonstrated a seamless blend of spiritual and maternal roles, which she balanced with grace and wisdom. An epitome of simplicity, grace and with deep understanding of spiritual matters, Sarada Ma's life is a source of inspiration for many women even today.

#### My mother's style of parenting and mine, by Savitha Rajagopal from Thiruvananthapuram

My mum apparently understood the power of repetitive messaging. All through my growing years, she tried to instil in us the habit of making our bed as soon as we woke up. I for one, would simply run off to school leaving her to tidy up after me. 'When are you going to learn?!' she chided. 'Fold the blanket and tuck the sheet tight' were words drummed constantly into my head. These chores finally became a habit in my late 20s.

Years later, I found myself constantly nagging my son to keep his room tidy. Every time I had to clean up after him, I wondered if he'd ever learn. He's 23 now and lives away from home. I look forward to our weekly chats when he talks about house cleaning. I laugh when he says, 'Can't bear to see my room in a mess!' As parents, we can definitely instil good habits in our children through repetitive messaging. So, let's not despair if they are not doing the right things today. Repeat, repeat, repeat - because it will all make sense to them someday.

#### Raising Children by Dr. Jolly Baruah from Guwahati, Assam

It was Rudyard Kipling who aptly said, 'God couldn't be everywhere and therefore he made mothers.' A mother is an integral part of a family and maternal love has always remained constant over the ages. What has changed significantly is the manner of upbringing of children keeping in sync with the societal, economic, cultural and technological changes.

As times are changing differences are bound to take place regarding how my mother brought me up and how I mothered my children. To be honest, differences are negligible. We were a family of ten children and naturally none of us got individual attention. My mother enthused me to do well in studies but she was never too ambitious or demanding. On the contrary, I had many expectations from my children. I not only wanted them to excel in studies but also wanted them to do well in extracurricular activities. I was not given any encouragement in this area. However, I looked upon my mother as a manifestation of love, compassion and power. She was like a fulcrum – I was bound to obey each of her wishes. She instilled in me good values and taught me to be spiritual – every morning and evening we had to pray at our family altar. I also ensured that my children followed the same.

Vivekananda Institute of Values (VIVA)

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### Practical Spirituality for All

#### ASK SWAMI SHANTATMANANDA

##### *A reader writes:*

Is it fair that society places great expectations on a mother even in these modern times?

##### *Swami Shantatmananda replies:*

Motherhood according to the Hindu tradition is of an exceptionally high order. Today working mothers are perhaps a necessity but assertion of individuality or ego gratification should not be the reason to work outside the home. A mother's position is unique and can never be compromised or replaced. If you look at the lives of most great people, they will say they owe everything to their mother. In fact, in spite of our economic progress there's a degradation of values in the society and one of the reasons is that the ideal of motherhood is being compromised. It is a delicately poised situation for a woman. All things can be resorted to but not at the cost of core motherhood values, which are aimed at bringing forth wonderful children, who will be extraordinary citizens and human beings. It is a difficult situation which only mothers can work out with the help of an understanding spouse and other supporting family members.

#### MOVEMENT – VIVA Events and Updates

##### ARISE: VIVA Parenting Workshop –

Two parenting workshops, one online and one at the VIVA premises were conducted on April 13th and April 20th respectively. The parents were very pleased to learn about a framework that could be used to face day-to-day challenges with less anxiety.



*ARISE parenting workshop in full swing at the VIVA premises*

##### Principals' Orientation Program –

On April 24th, a principals' orientation workshop for principals of CBSE private schools of the Delhi-NCR region was conducted at the VIVA auditorium. The importance of values was stressed upon by the guest speaker, Swami Sarvpriyananda and VIVA in charge Swami Shantatmananda. Thereafter the principals were taken through a brief overview of the Foundations of Citizenship program (FCP). FCP is a one-year value education program for middle school children.



*Principals' Orientation Workshop at VIVA*

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### Practical Spirituality for All

#### The Awakened Citizen Program (ACP) and Awakening:

The following teacher training workshops were conducted for ACP and Awakening:

1. On April 20th, a one-day teachers' training workshop on Awakening was held at 4 Kendriya Vidyalaya location in Delhi and at New Era Public School, Mayapuri.
2. On April 6th, a one-day training workshop on Awakening for 53 educators was held at the JBM Global School, Noida.
3. On April 26th and April 27th, an ACP Year 2 workshop was held and successfully completed at Shree Ram Welfare Society's High School.



VIVA master facilitators at an Awakening workshop



Teachers and VIVA facilitators at the ACP training



An Awakening training underway



Svarat workshop at VIVA

SVARAT – Living in Ananda: On April 20th the 2nd session of the SVARAT workshop was held at the VIVA premises. The topic was 'Bondage is of the mind-Freedom is of the mind.' The guest speaker was the reputed educationist and writer Dr. Hema Raghavan. With anecdotes from her own life, Dr. Raghavan brought out the practical application of this very high spiritual ideal. The participants learnt a lot and were very grateful for her talk.

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