

IN MEMORIAM
REVERED SWAMI SWAHANANDAJI

SWAMI TATHAGATANANDA

I met Revered Swami Swahanandaji at Saradapith. In 1956, he came to Belur Math to be ordained in Sannyas. As he was ex-monastic member of Saradapith, he came to visit Sarapith Ashrama.

His father's name was Nirmal Chandra Goswami and his mother was Pramila Bala. His father was initiated by Holy Mother. At one point, his father requested Holy Mother to become a monk. Holy Mother replied, "No, my child. Two members of your family will become monks." This prophecy was fulfilled.

His father passed away two months before the birth of his third child. On June 29, 1921, the child was born in a religious family in a small village in Assam, which is today in Bangladesh. His name was Bipadbhanjan.

While he was reading in school, he used to frequent the Ramakrishna Ashram and rendered some service. When he was fourteen years old, he wrote a letter to Rev. Swami Akhandananda. During the Centenary Celebration of Shri Ramakrishna in 1936, he came to Belur Math as a volunteer and had the unique opportunity of getting initiation from Rev. Swami Vijnanananda. He also had another unique opportunity in seeing Revered Swami Abhedananda. He also met Revered Swamis Parameshananda and Saradeshanada and he remained close to both the Swamis throughout his life.

He was a good student and secured a letter mark in Sanskrit (80%) in his matriculation examination. He passed his B. A. examination from Murari Chand College, Sylhet. He came to Calcutta to study for his M. A. He joined the Institute of Culture, which was located at Wellington Square. They used to keep a group of boys in that Ashram. But Nalini Maharaj requested him to come to the Parthuriagata Ashram. So he came there and studied for his M. A. for three years

at Calcutta University. He earned two Master Degrees in English Literature and English Language.

He joined the Order in 1947 at Saradapith. He was posted at the adjacent college, Vidyamandir. He was transferred to the Madras Math in 1948 and remained there until 1961. At Madras Math, he did daily Puja in the shrine for some time. The then Manager Swami was a very dynamic monk and he took the initiative to have Durga Puja at the monastery with all the paraphernalia as we do in Bengal, for the first time. This Durga Puja was duly performed for three years. Swami Swahanandaji did puja for three years. That is why his name was Durga Chaitanya when he received his vow of Brahmacharya. From 1956 to 1961 he was the Editor of *Vedanta Kesari*.

Swami Swahanandaji translated the *Chandogya Upanishad* while he was in Madras. He was not very much interested to take up any other translation. But one day, the Manager Swami announced during the lunchtime, “Swahananda is going to translate *Panchadasi* from Sanskrit to English.” Due to that announcement, Swahanandaji involved himself to do the translation.

When he was in Madras, he was asked to give a talk on Swamiji in some institution—either at Vivekananda College or at the Student’s Home—I cannot exactly recall. Because this was a public lecture, while going for sleep the previous night, he told Swami Vivekananda, “If I do not speak well, I will never again speak about you during my life.” That very night, he had either a dream or a vision of Swamiji—I do not remember exactly.

While at Madras, he encouraged devotees to read *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. One gentleman was so inspired as a result of reading Swamiji that he composed two stories in one night and went to the Math the following morning to show them to Swami Swahanandaji.

After his term at Madras, he spent about six months in performing spiritual austerities in the Himalayas. When he was forty-one years old, he became the youngest Head Swami at the Delhi Center. When he was at Delhi, I met him when I stayed at the Delhi Ashrama for a few days. I accompanied him to attend a few

lectures outside the Ashrama. While I was staying with him, he told me one day, “I have got one ambition in my life: to spread the message of Shri Ramakrishna.” We shall see how he kept his goal through his constant endeavor in spreading the message of Shri Ramakrishna.

Revered Swami Swahanandaji was posted as Assistant Minister of the Vedanta Society of Northern California in the United States in 1968. In 1970, he became the Head of the Vedanta Society of Berkeley, California. He started two centers when he was in Berkeley—San Jose and Stanton. He took charge of the Hollywood Center in December 1976. He initiated, with the help of devotees, two voluntary organizations, one Asti and one Ramakrishna Foundation. Through these two institutions, he was able to send a huge amount of money to the distressed people in India.

While in India, he accommodated some Brahmacharis who were not able to adjust themselves in their respective Centers. He encouraged American nuns and monks to speak in the pulpit. He made one nun a head of the Center. He started seventeen Centers and Sub-centers throughout the United States. He left the Ramakrishna Movement a rich legacy of forty years of splendid spiritual service. He was a dynamic monk. He touched many hearts through his loving, amiable, compassionate heart. He was easily accessible to others. He was liberal in giving initiation. His exemplary life, his scholarship, his loving personality and above all, his one-pointed goal of spreading Shri Ramakrishna’s message will be a great source of inspiration to all of us.

I pay my respectful homage to our dear and Revered Swami.