

History of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Bhubaneswar

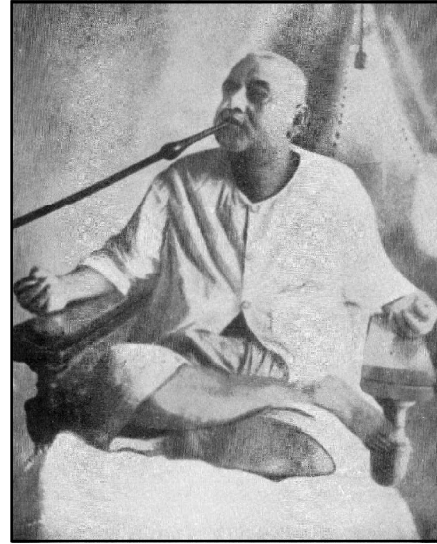
Swami Tannishthananda

Introduction: This is the story of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. At the dawn of the third millennium, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission reviews the story of its hundred and twenty two years of loving service to humanity or, in the words of Swami Vivekananda, service to that God who by the ignorant is called man.

Since the Ramakrishna Mission is inseparably linked to Ramakrishna Math, this is also the story of Ramakrishna Math. And since the message of Sri Ramakrishna has been spreading in ever-widening circles through and beyond the two institutions mentioned above, this is the story of Ramakrishna Movement as well.

This story of Ramakrishna Mission, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Movement is not to be taken as mere history. History deals with the outer happening of men and institutions, where as 'story' deals with the inner dynamics of a movement. It is the unfolding of a Truth, a power, through men and institutions.

Swami Vivekananda has stated that at the interval of every five hundred years a new set of universal ideas appear in some part of the globe. These ideas manifest themselves through an extraordinary person known as the Prophet or Avatar. Speaking about the function of a Prophet, Swamiji says: 'He focuses in his own mind the thought of the age in which he is living and gives it back to mankind in concrete form'.



Swami Brahmanandaji at Bhubaneswar Math

This was what Sri Ramakrishna, who is regarded as the Avatar of the present age by millions of people, did. He came with a message, a new set of ideas suited to the needs of the present age. He first applied it in his own life and changed it with power. He trained a group of young disciples to be the torch-bearers of his message, and through them laid the foundation of a new monastic order, which came to be known later as the Ramakrishna Math. As in a hydroelectric project electricity is first generated by giant turbines and is then transmitted to different places through high-tension power mains, so also the spiritual power generated by Sri Ramakrishna through his direct disciples. Subsequently, through the disciples of those direct disciples and through successive generations of disciples, the message and power of Sri Ramakrishna have

been spreading in ever-widening circles to form what may be termed the Ramakrishna Movement.

The story of Ramakrishna Math began when Sri Ramakrishna climbed to the terrace of the house in Dakshineswar and called out: 'O my children, wherever you are come to me. My heart yearns to see you.' This happened after he had completed the practice of various spiritual disciplines and people had started coming to see him. In response to that mystic call, young spiritual seekers, most of whom were studying in school or college, began to gather around him. Under his guidance they practiced intense spiritual disciplines. During Sri Ramakrishna's last illness, these young men nursed him day and night. He instilled in their minds the spirit of monastic renunciation and also brotherly love for one another. Among them the Master earmarked Narendra (who later became the world famous Swami Vivekananda) to be the leader of the group.

After the Master's passing in August 1886, these young disciples started living in a dilapidated house at Baranagore in north Calcutta. A few months later, they took the formal vows of sannyasa, assumed new names, and thus formed a new monastic order which came to be known later as Ramakrishna Math.

The monastery was moved six years later to another place in Alambazar, and from there it was finally moved to its own permanent premises at Belur in Howrah district in 1898. It was registered as a Trust in 1899, and since then it is being administered by a Board of Trustees consisting of senior monks of Ramakrishna Order.

Unlike the Ramakrishna Math which is a purely monastic order, the Ramakrishna

Mission is a social service society in which the monks of Ramakrishna Math and lay supporters cooperate in conducting different forms of social service such as running schools, hospitals, rural development etc. It was founded by Swami Vivekananda on 1 May 1897, soon after his return from the west. The original idea probably was that the mission would be managed by lay devotees. But since this did not materialize, owing to the unfavourable socio-economical condition of the society, the monks of Ramakrishna Order took over the administration of the mission also. The Ramakrishna Mission was registered as a charitable society in 1909.

Swami Vivekananda's Threefold Vision: All the activities of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission and their outlook on society and the world, are based on Swami Vivekananda's three insights or three-fold vision.

Swamiji's first insight was into the true meaning and purpose of Sri Ramakrishna's life. During the early years of his contact with the master Swamiji had difficulty in accepting him as an Avatar, but later revelations gave him the conviction that Sri Ramakrishna was the Avatar of the present age.

Whereas most of the other followers of Sri Ramakrishna thought of him in relation to their own personal salvation, Swamiji thought of him in relation to the welfare of the whole mankind. Swamiji saw that Sri Ramakrishna's life was the verification of not only the eternal truths of religion discovered by the ancient sages of India but also the essential truths of all religions. This provided a new understanding of religion, and a new criterion to judge the truth-claims of different religions. Sri

Swamiji wanted 'to set in motion a machinery which will bring noblest ideas to the doorstep of even the poorest and the meanest.' It was to fulfil the need for such a machinery

Swamiji's threefold vision underlines all the activities, aims and policies of Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

The second phase of Ramakrishna Movement (1906-1936)- starting of

Odisha - The land of Temples : Odisha, a state of India, is located on the east coast of India, by the Bay of Bengal. Odisha was earlier known as Utkal or Kalinga, which was invaded by the Maurya Emperor Ashoka in 261 B.C. This state has a history spanning a period over 3000 years. It has several popular destinations, some of which are Puri, Konark,

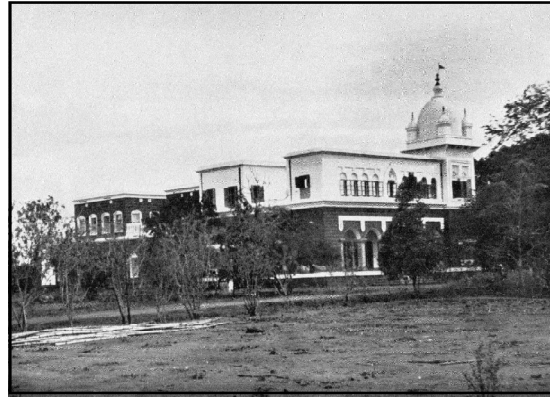
Lingaraj Temple : The 11th century Lingaraj Temple of Bhubaneswar is dedicated to Lord Shiva. The surface of the 54.86 meter high Lingaraj temple is covered with carvings. The temple is adorned with beautiful images and carvings on its spire. The temple has the Trident of Lord Shiva and Chakra of Lord Vishnu on either side of its main gate. A pond named Bindusagar lying to north of the Lingaraj Temple is said to contain water from every holy stream, pool and tank in India. There are a number of temples and shrines around it. In the centre of it is water pavilion where once in a year, the Lingaraj Temple's deity is brought for ritual bathing. There is also a temple of Divine Mother named Kedar Gauri where there is a well called Gauri Kund. Another important temple in Bhubaneswar is Mukteshwar temple. It is dedicated to Lord Shiva. Its ornamented gateway which is known as Torana shows the influence of Buddhism. Another fascinating temple in Bhubaneswar is Rajarani Temple. It is wonderfully constructed from red and gold sand stone, which is locally called as Rajarani. Hence, it is called Rajarani Temple. This temple

does not have a presiding deity. Other important temples of Bhubaneswar are Vittal Devi temple dedicated to Goddess Chamunda, located near Bindusagar Lake, Parasurameshwar Temple, which is dedicated to Lord Shiva, and Brahmeshwar Temple is the first temple to portray the musicians and dancers on its external walls. Ramakrishna Math, Bhubaneswar is situated very near to these holy temples.

Ramakrishna Math, Bhubaneswar:

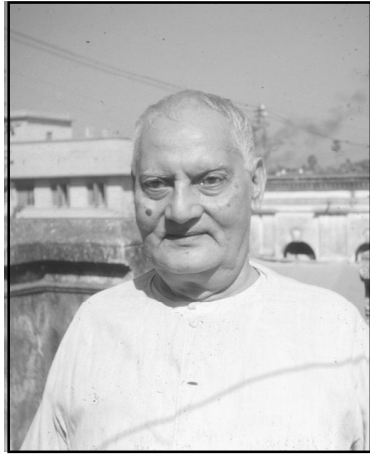
In 1917 while returning from Puri, **Swami Brahmananda** stopped at Bhubaneswar to visit the famous Lingaraj temple. He stayed there for 3 days and felt a wonderful spiritual atmosphere. He arranged to purchase a plot of land for a monastery. He commented: "This place is very conducive for practicing yoga. It is a place of Lord Shiva - a hidden Varanasi. Practicing a little spiritual discipline here, one can accrue immense results. It is a healthy place. After getting tired from working in other places, the monks may come here to rest as well as practice meditation." Maharaj was to build an Ashrama at Bhubaneswar under his supervision.

On 15th July 1917 Maharaj entrusted **Swami Shankarananda** (Amulya Maharaj) to go and search for a piece of land in Bhubaneswar for starting a centre there. Accordingly Swami Shankarananda found out a suitable land 4.42 acres for establishing the math. Maharaj consented to this proposal and the land was purchased and registered on 26th July 1917. On 21st September 1917, Maharaj arranged for offering of Anna-Bhoga to Mahaprabhu and Vimala Devi and served many Brahmins sumptuously to their full satisfaction. Then Maharaj went to



Ramakirshna Math, (earlier temple)

Bhubaneswar and stayed in Sanatorium from 2nd to 4th November 1917. Swami Shankarananda took him to the land purchased for the centre. He was satisfied to see the land, which was not very far from Lingaraj Temple. Pointing to an adjoining piece, he said, "There, in older times, stood a large Buddhist monastery, where thousands of monks attained nirvana." Swami Shankarananda who was entrusted with the construction work of Ramakrishna Math, Bhubaneswar said, "Construction was under taken in the year 1917-18 and I was entrusted with this task by Raja Maharaj." He used to stay in a small rented house at Kedar Gauri and cooked his own food. He would finish his meal in the morning at 8 A.M. and go straight to the construction site. At that time it was difficult to get good mason. Hence he had to manage with local lads. Temporary huts were erected for them at the site. He had to face lots of trials and tribulations while constructing the Math. Raja Maharaj had come down from Belur Math twice and stayed at Sharat-Kutir to supervise the work. He used to come to the site one or two times a day. The purchased land was in a remote place covered with thick



Swami Shankarananda

forest. Wild animals like tigers, leopards and bears were very common along with poisonous snakes and scorpions.

When Amulya Maharaj went to supervise the construction of the building for the Bhubaneswar Math, Raja Maharaj verbally instructed him about the architectural plans etc. He said to Gokul Babu, "There will be the statue of **a lion on the top of the gate** of the Bhubaneswar Math. Please make a model of that lion for us." (The lion on the gate of the Bhubaneswar Math is a replica of the model made by Gokul Babu.)

Raja Maharaj was in need of money for the construction work of Bhubaneswar Math, but if someone offered to give money, he would sometime refuse it or if someone gave a certain amount, he would take only a portion of it; and the rest would be returned to the donor. He used to say that sometimes money is made through swindling people in various ways or causing suffering to others. The curses of these people are on such money. He used to say, "The householders are turning into renunciate by giving away their hard earned money, and

the monks are becoming attached to enjoyment by taking their money."

Bhubaneswar Math was surrounded by thick forest. It was a single storied building consisting of **four rooms, a hall in the middle and wide verandas on north and south side**. There was no guest-room. Raja Maharaj used to stay in a room west to southern veranda. In front of his room there was the shrine of Sri Ramakrishna. The construction of the first floor of the temple was started during the time of Raja Maharaj but was completed after his passing away. He instructed Mahapurush Maharaj to install the image of Sri Ramakrishna on the first floor.

On 29th October 1919 Maharaj reached Bhubaneswar from Belur Math with many monks and devotees. It was the time of Durga Puja. On 31st October 1919, Maharaj consecrated Bhubaneswar Math. Next day there was a big Bhandara for Brahmins as well as the poor people (Daridra Narayan). During this period Maharaj stayed in Bhubaneswar for around one year. In this period there was a famine in that region. Maharaj arranged for relief work in that area. In order to make a good arrangement of medical treatment for local people, he started a permanent **charitable dispensary** in Bhubaneswar Math.

The compound of Bhubaneswar Math previously heavily littered with gravel was decorated in one year with fruit trees and flowering plants by Swami Brahmananda. To anyone who came for a visit the place was like an oasis in a desert. It is here where Swami Brahmananda once said, "Trees have feelings. They know who takes care of them. They become happy when the person who takes care of them comes near them. They become

Raja Maharaj regarded Bhubaneswar Math as Tapovan. Math building was like a grand palace but the construction cost was hardly between five and six thousands rupees only. Raja Maharaj made adequate arrangement for a permanent source of income for Bhubaneswar Math. There was an expert mason named Bhagaban who worked for the construction of the Math from the beginning to the end with full devotion without caring for money. He was an expert in plastering and knew carpentry too. Raja Maharaj highly appreciated his work, his craftsmanship and his devotion to work. Maharaj awarded him a silver medal. He expressed his desire to become a monk. His request was granted. Maharaj fulfilled his desire and allowed him to stay in the Math. He became Swami Nityasiddhananda. He joined the order in 1924 and got Sannyasa in 1937 and died in 1945.

Swami Brahmananda : Swami
Brahmananda was the first President of the Order, spiritual son of the Master and indicated by him to belong to the class of 'Ishwarkoti', classmate and dearest brother monk of Swamiji. Rakhal Chandra Ghosh in pre-monastic life, son of Anandamohan, an affluent land owner of Sikra Kulingram of Basirhat in 24 Parganas, and Kailaskamini Devi, was born on 21.01.1863, the second lunar day of the bright fortnight of the month of Magh. Motherless at the age of five, he was brought

Soon Rakhal began staying at Dakshineshwar and his father, objecting, put him under lock and key, but one day he ran away. Anandamohan visited Dakshineshwar and, pacified by the master, was also interested to find many rich and learned men among the master's devotees who, he hoped, might advance his own interests. The master treated Rakhal as a mother treats her child and he too used to behave like a child. The Master taught him various kinds of spiritual disciplines and he was absorbed in practicing them day and night. The Master warded off his family's efforts to involve him in worldly life. The Master said that though Rakhal had a wife and a son, "he has realized that all these are illusory and impermanent. Rakhal will never be attached to the world."

Rakhal joined the others in serving the Master during his illness. The Master's praise of his "Raj-Buddhi" (king like administrative acumen) brought him the appellation 'Raja' from brother-disciples. After the demise of the Master, he embraced monastic life (1887) taking the name "Swami Brahmananda", and was engaged in extensive pilgrimage and practice of severe spiritual austerities. His wife died (1891) followed by his son too (1896) and shortly afterwards his father. The Ramakrishna Mission was formed on 1st May 1897 and Brahmananda was the President of

Whenever he had time and opportunity he would practise sadhana in one of his four

Seventh Visit: On 30th May 1910 he returned to Puri and stayed there for few months. At that time, there was a great conflagration in Bhubaneswar. Many houses were reduced to ashes. The monks of the Ramakrishna order did relief work there and helped the affected people in many ways like rebuilding their houses. Maharaj returned to Calcutta on 29th November 1910. There was an appeal for collecting funds for this relief work

present, but the expenses will go high when the rains damage or wash away the stumped walls that are left standing among the burnt up piles. Labour too will be much more expensive then. It will then be very difficult therefore to manage to raise the huts.

An Appeal

Contributions should be sent to Swami
Brahmananda, President, The Ramakrishna
Mission, The Math, Belur P.O., Dist. Howrah.

In response to an appeal for help made to the President, the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission decided to open a relief centre in the affected areas, and the two Brahmacharin workers who were deputed for the purpose, have begun to distribute materials for construction of huts to about forty families, with the small fund advanced to them. A large number of huts have to be raised at once and an appeal has been issued by Swami Brahmananda on behalf of these helpless people. We hope the generous public knowing the urgent demand of the situation will respond to it without delay. On them alone the success of the undertaking absolutely depends.

As mentioned earlier, Raja Maharaj not only established Bhubaneswar Math but also stayed here many times and many important events are associated with his staying. Raja Maharaj was very keen that the monks of Ramakrishna Order should go to Bhubaneswar centre for both rest and performance of spiritual austerities. He would ask the monks very cordially, "When are you going there for a visit ?" Someone asked him once, "Why have you made the gate of Bhubaneswar Math so massive and tall ?" Smilingly he replied, "Now I am the President of an order that has very little financial resources. But in future, the Presidents of our order will enter this Math in great grandeur, sitting on the back of an elephant. That is why I wanted the gate to be built like that." Maharaj smilingly again replied, "in future, this place will awaken. Bhubaneswar will be the centre of activity in Odisha."

Bhubaneswar Math was surrounded by thick forest. One day a big bear fell into a large well of the Math. It was lifted out of the well by chain and rope with the help of many

On 12th January 1920, on the occasion of Swami Vivekananda's birthday celebration, Maharaj ordained nine Brahmacharis into Sannyasa and one into Brahmacharya. On 23rd January 1920 his birthday was celebrated and in the evening Ramnam and Bhajans were sung. On 1st March 1920 at the earnest request of Rambabu, Maharaj went to Puri for six days and stayed there at Shashi Niketan and then returned to Bhubaneswar. This was his last visit

to Puri. Swami Saradananda and Vaikunthnath Sanyal also came there. On 7th March 1920 Maharaj started for Calcutta.

A f t e r
establishing
Bhubaneswar
Math, Maharaj



used to spend most of his time with the monks and devotees in giving instructions, spiritual conversations as well as Bhajan-kirtan. One day, a monk after offering his pranam to Maharaj, asked for blessings so that he may get devotion at the feet of the Master. Maharaj became silent and serious and said, "You see, if one can become humble, totally depending on only God and keep the spirit of poverty then only he may get devotion." After telling many things about Japam and Meditation, one day he told him, "Always do Japam even when you are breathing. Once you develop this habit then Japam becomes natural to you and it continues even before and after sleep. If one does his

"No Maharaj," I insisted, "I have not seen him."

Then I started shedding tears, remembering my great misfortune. He said again, "I am telling you that you actually saw him!" Just then I quickly glanced over at him and saw that it was not him, but it was Sri Ramakrishna who was sitting there!

Twelfth Visit: Again on 27th March 1920, Maharaj returned to Bhubaneswar with Ramlaldada.

During this period, Sri **Boshishwar Sen**, a great agricultural scientist who was closely associated with the monks of Ramakrishna Order, came to Bhubaneswar and stayed with Maharaj. Regarding his visit, he wrote to Swami Turiyananda. In reply to his letter, Swami Turiyananda wrote, "I am too happy to know that you have spent your Easter holidays very joyfully with Maharaj. Swami Saradananda had already given me the news of Bhubaneswar

Math. I am also happy to receive the news from you especially about the sound health of Maharaj."

During his stay at Bhubaneswar in 1920, in the month of April he heard the solemn news of passing away of Swami Adbhutananda. Soon after, in May 1920, on receiving the news of illness of Rambabu, he became very disturbed and worried. He asked the monks to pray to Thakur for Rambabu. With the untimely death of Rambabu on 14th May 1920, he was filled with sorrow and became silent and sombre for few days.

On 20th July 1920 Holy mother Sri Sarada Devi left her mortal coil. Swami Brahmananda was then at Bhubaneswar Math. He was sleeping and suddenly feeling sad said, "I wonder how the Holy Mother is doing in Calcutta !" On Thursday morning just as he was getting ready to go out for a walk, a telegram came from Swami Saradananda carrying the sad news of the Holy Mother's passing away. Hearing the news, Swami Brahmananda became so over-whelmed with grief that he could no longer stand up. He immediately went and lay down in the bed. He arose a little later saying, "I shall observe mourning." Then he told to other monks, "Those of you who are disciples of the Holy Mother must not wear shoes during the three days of your mourning. You will all eat only Havisya." He also ate only Havisya during the three day mourning period and did not wear shoes for several days in honour of the memory of the Holy Mother. He kept all his grief inside. Only once he said, "As long as the Holy Mother was with us, I felt like I was in the protective shelter of a mountain."

In 1920 when Maharaj was in Bhubaneswar Math, he asked one monk whether he was getting proper food. The monk said that he was not happy with the kind of food served in the Math. After listening to this Maharaj became serious and kept quite for sometime and then said, "How much food thus one need ? What a wonderful place this is for doing Sadhana. Where will you get such a place ? How much hardship we had undergone during our period of Sadhana ? We never cared for food."

On 9th November 1920, **Kali Puja** was celebrated in Bhubaneswar Math. As per the instruction of Maharaj, the idol was brought from Cuttack. It was made by a renowned sculptor Natubabu. Maharaj became very happy to see the image and told that it was just similar to that of Dakshineswar and he blessed the sculptor. Swami Ambikananda performed the Puja. Maharaj was in ecstatic mood the whole day. It was a wonderful occasion.

On 4th December 1920 in the evening he started for Belur Math.

Thirteenth Visit: On 1st April 1921, Maharaj travelled to Bhubaneswar by Howrah Puri Express along with Mahapurush Maharaj and other Monks and Brahmacharins. He reached there next day morning. On 15th April 1921, there was **Ratha Yatra Festival at Lingaraj temple** (Ashokastami). All took part in it. With Mahapurush Maharaj he went to south India on 18th April and returned to Bhubaneswar at midnight on 21st November 1921. After his return to Bhubaneswar his attendants could find him in more indrawn mood. He used to walk in the Math campus itself oblivious of outer surroundings. In this

separate cottage for you and send your food there. But I beseech you, please do not leave this place."

All those present there were much moved by his sincere pleading. But the monk did not heed his pleas. After half an hour of such pleadings, the monk still insisted that he would go away. Then Maharaj said, "Listen son, a human being is helpless. Can he accomplish everything that he wishes for or live a pure life ? There are so many evil propensities." Saying this he became grave and silent. Mahapurush Maharaj, who was listening to all this, told the sadhu, "you did not heed Maharaj's advice. You will soon realise your folly." Very soon after his departure from Bhubaneswar Math, the monk committed a grave offence. He fell from the moral ideal and was expelled from the order.

Swami Kashishwarananda narrates in his reminiscences : What an extraordinary devotion he cherished for Mahaprasad of Sri Jagannath ! Once I informed him that I would be going to Puri from Bhubaneswar. He told me, "Good. Please bring me some Mahaprasad." In due course I brought him Mahaprasad. How happy he was! Later his attendants told me, "When your train was to arrive, he became very anxious and kept on looking at the railway line and fidgeted." He was waiting for the arrival of the train and the Mahaprasad." When Maharaj was in Bhubaneswar Math, there was a woman who was working as sweeper. When she used to see people going for Thakur's darshan, she also developed desire to have darshan of Thakur. She went to Maharaj to seek his permission and asked, "Do I have a right to visit the temple and have Thakur's darshan ?" Maharaj was pleased and said, "Why not ? Take this soap,

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Satyendranath Mazumdar came to Bhubaneswar from Calcutta on a visit. After staying in Bhubaneswar for a few days, and just as he was getting ready to go back to Calcutta, Mazumdar said that he had come all the way from Calcutta mainly wishing to visit Puri. But Swami Brahmananda would not pay heed to Mr. Mazumdar's words, insisting that he must return to Calcutta and not go to Puri. When Mr. Mazumdar reached the Bhubaneswar railway station, he was amazed to see that the Swami had already sent a Brahmachari there to make sure that Mr. Mazumdar bought a ticket for Calcutta. Later Mr. Mazumdar came to Belur Math one day

Tarasundari reminisces : Once I went to Puri with the desire to see Lord Jagannath. On the way to Puri I stopped in the city of Bhubaneswar and stayed in a dharmasala. Then I heard that Swami Brahmananda was staying at Bhubaneswar Ramakrishna Math.

So I went to see him there. O how heartily he welcomed me! With great eagerness and affection he made me sit and inquired about what I would like to eat etc. He said, "Alas, scorching sun must have made your mouth dry, and you have come here for your health ! You shouldn't have walked in the scorching sun ! ... Where do you have your meals ? Staying tomorrow you must come and eat your meals with us. Tell me what kind of food you like !" Then he said lamenting, "My child, we are penniless sadhus, sannyasins and fakirs ! I wonder what good things we can procure for you here !"

His love and cordiality completely overwhelmed me and left me speechless. Just think of who I was ! Think of the low level of society to which I belonged ! I was so low that I didn't deserve anything but hatred and disrespect from the world. I had no father, relatives or friends to call my own. The entire world to me was somebody else's home, and I was a stranger. No one would even talk to me or look at me without self-interest ! But today Swami Brahmananda, the all renouncing monk who is respected by one and all, accepted me as his own through this pure love, affection, and the unexpected attention !

I thought, Is it paternal affection ? No, it must be something much higher than that. I could not stop crying. It was as if all my pain and suffering began pouring out as my tears, and started falling to the ground. I felt that at last I had found a place where I could find real solace and peace. I had at last found someone with genuine love and sympathy for me. To him I was not a fallen woman. I was not an untouchable. I was not a hated creature ! No, I was the spiritual daughter of Swami

Brahmananda ! He was my father, my abode of peace, and my God !

Swami Brahmananda told me so many things that day. I don't remember them all. He told me, "My child, you've seen that the world is full of suffering. Don't think that we never suffered. When I first went to Thakur I was young. I used to do my spiritual practice, but wouldn't find peace. Many thoughts would arise in my mind. Sometimes I would wonder why I hadn't found peace yet ! Thinking in that manner one day I felt that I wouldn't even go and see Thakur. I would quietly run away. But there I saw him standing in front of me. He said, What are you thinking ? You have been going through a lot of suffering is not it ? I kept quiet. Then he gently stroked my head with his hand. Instantly all my suffering was gone! Then I felt great peace and joy." hearing Swami Brahmananda's words, suddenly, I cried out "Father, I am also burning inside. It's too much suffering; I can't tolerate it anymore. That is why I restlessly wander here and there. Father, would you please soothe my burning heart ?"

With great affection and sympathy he said, "My child, please pray to Thakur. There is no fear. He came only to relieve our suffering. Chant his holy name. At first you will find it a little difficult. Later Thakur will make everything all right. Don't be afraid my child, there is no cause for fear. Eventually, you will have great joy, great fun."

Tara wanted to live near her Guru, so she brought a piece of land to the west of the Lingaraj temple. Maharaj went to see the land. As he stood there, in a meditative mood, he remarked: "It is a wonderful spot for practicing spiritual discipline. This place is very auspicious and Lord Shiva is in the north east." Later on,

she built a room at that place. In that room, she kept a photograph of Thakur. She would decorate the photo with flowers and garlands and used to sing and dance before it as if Thakur himself was seeing and listening. This was her way of showing devotion to Thakur."

Until 1921, Tara continued her acting with tremendous enthusiasm and passion, but when her Guru, Swami Brahmananda died in 1922, she felt renunciation within. She built a house at Bhubaneswar and planned to retire there. She then lost all interest in acting and went into deep depression. Swami Shivananda heard about her condition and summoned her to Belur Math. She cried for Maharaj, and Shivananda consoled her. He asked her to build a temple on her property in the name of Maharaj. Tara followed the Swami's advice and named the temple 'Rakhal Kunj'.

Swami Shivananda came to Bhubaneswar to inaugurate **Rakhal Kunj** and install the picture of Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda on the altar. Later, Swami Subodhananda installed some of the relics of Swami Brahmananda under the alter of Rakhal Kunj with special ceremony and a homa fire. Tara's dream was fulfilled. She was excited about her place of sadhana, and she spent hours in worship and meditation there. However, she had a desire to offer cooked food to the Master but felt herself unworthy. One day Swami Akhandananda visited Rakhal Kunj and remarked; "Mother Tara, what is this? The Master looked emaciated. Don't you offer cooked food?" Ashamed of her sinful life, Tara replied, 'No, Swami,' Swami Akhandananda advised her to offer cooked food and milk to the Master everyday.

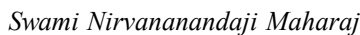
At the age of 54, Tara finally retired from the stage to live in Rakhal Kunj in Bhubaneswar, where she remained for 12 years. Her daughter, Pratibha, lived with her.

In those days many people used to come to Bhubaneswar for a change. While staying there, some of them also visited the Bhubaneswar Ramakrishna Math. Once a gentleman named Khitish Babu accompanied by his brother-in-law Yogesh, came for a visit from Khulna. They often used to come to Bhubaneswar Math. Swami Brahmananda liked them. He was particularly fond of Yogesh. Once during a conversation Yogesh remarked, "We grow very high quality of rice in our country." Swami Brahmananda then told him, "That is very nice. Why don't you arrange to bring some of that rice to be offered to Thakur in our shrine?" So few days later Yogesh came to Math carrying a small postal parcel containing rice and said to Swami Brahmananda, "Maharaj, this rice has come from our home."

Seeing the small size of the packet, the sevaks were not too happy. It most probably contained only one or one and a half seers of rice. Every now and then the Math used to receive several mounds of rice (one mound is equal to 82 lbs) as a gift from Rambabu's estate in Jhankar. But when Swami Brahmananda saw the rice brought by Yogesh he was pleased and said, "Excellent! This is very good quality rice! The payas for Thakur will be made with this rice."

Throughout the week he went on praising the quality of the rice brought by Yogesh. Eventually, the rice was used to prepare payas for Thakur. Swami Brahmananda praised that rice so highly

Swami Mukteshwarananda related: Once Swami Brahmananda said to us at the Bhubaneswar Math, "The kitchen store room is empty because you don't do your spiritual practice properly. If you perform spiritual austerities, then food will be provided by God."



((((((((((R. K. Math, Bhubaneswar, Souvenir ((((((((((((

One day at Bhubaneswar Math, Maharaj was standing near the staircase and was to go to upstairs. Suddenly from somewhere above, colour powder (Abir) fell on his body and feet. After a thorough search no body was found on the terrace. Dr.Ratikant was standing behind. Maharaj asked him, "Is the colour festival today (Dol Purnima) ?" Nobody was aware of it. After going through the almanac it was found that it was the day of colour festival (Dol Purnima). Doctor was a devotee and humorous fellow. He collected the colour powder from the floor and smeared his forehead with it. Then colour was brought and Maharaj offered it to Sri Ramakrishna in the shrine. Others present there did the same. Then all joyfully played colour with one another. Maharaj also took part in it.

Swami Bhaskarananda relates the following story which he had heard from Swami Gangeshananda when he was staying at Belur Math around 1970. The incident happened many years ago at the Bhubaneswar Ashrama. At that time Swami Brahmananda was residing there. One day he called Swami Gangeshananda and told him, "Bring me some holy Ganga Water." Swami Gangeshananda brought a small bottle of Ganga water and Swami Brahmananda sprinkled some of it on his body. Putting the bottle aside, Swami Brahmananda called his sevak Swami Nirvanananda. When the Swami came, Swami Brahmananda pointed to a book in a book case, and asked Swami Nirvanananda to bring it to him. Then Swami Brahmananda sat down on a chair, apparently to read it. But he did not open the book. Instead, he looked at it for a while and then closing his eyes, sat for sometime as though meditating. Then he returned the book to Swami Nirvanananda and asked him to put the book back on the shelf. After that Swami Brahmananda got up and walked out of the room. Swami Gangeshananda watched everything from a distance. He became curious to know why Swami Brahmananda felt he had to purify himself with Ganga water before touching the book. What holy book could it be that needed such purification? To satisfy his curiosity, Swami Gangeshananda took the book from the shelf. To his amazement he saw that it was not a religious book at all. It was a copy of Emerson's Essays. Swami Gangeshananda couldn't at first understand why Swami Brahmananda considered the Book so holy. But when he opened the book he saw Swami Vivekananda's hand-written inscription on the first page

indicating that he had given the book to Swami Brahmananda as a loving gift. Swami Gangeshananda now understood that the book was sacred to Swami Brahmananda because it had come from Swami Vivekananda. According to Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda was born a free soul and was the greatest among his disciples. Sri Ramakrishna considered him an incarnation of the ancient sage Nara, as well as of Lord Narayan. This incident proves what deep respect and admiration Swami Brahmananda had for his brother disciple Swami Vivekananda. Swami Brahmananda's spiritual emotion was roused thinking of the book's association with Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Bhuteshananda told one incident which he heard from Maharaj's attendant. There was a hotel nearby where pilgrims from different parts of the country stayed when they visited Bhubaneswar. Three young men from Calcutta were staying at the hotel and they asked the manager about the places worth visiting. He mentioned the names of the prominent temples there and told the young men that they could also visit in the town a branch of the Ramakrishna Order. Then he shared with them the local gossip. He said: "The head of the Monastery (meaning Maharaj) lives in a princely style. His hookah is made of gold. The monastery is a big campus." The young men said, "It's outrageous that a monk should live in such a luxurious way, why don't you people teach him a lesson?"

The hotel manager said, "oh my God ! That is unthinkable. A lot of big guns visit the place and I don't have the courage to say anything against the Swami." All right, then, the

Swami Saradananda wanted that Maharaj should consecrate the temple of Holy Mother at Belur Math on 20th December 1921. But Maharaj expressed his inability to leave Bhubaneswar Math. Swami Saradananda

While I was in Bhubaneswar, I sometimes had to cook for Maharaj. In a joking way he would say, 'Stay here and cook.' But he always had in mind that he would send me to Madras. One day, as I was standing on the veranda in the presence of Maharaj, he said to an older devotee, "I am sending this boy to Madras so that he will learn to speak English." Of course, I never dreamt I was meant for work in America. Then a letter came from Calcutta, written by one of our young Swamis, saying that Swami Saradananda, Secretary of the Order wanted me to go to Calcutta to establish an educational institution there. A wealthy man had offered a fund, and I had been connected with this offer at the time I was about to leave the university and join the Order. When

Maharaj smiled and replied, "In future, this place will awaken. Bhubaneswar will be the centre of activity in Odisha." He made this statement in 1918-19. By the 1940's his prediction started coming true. In the 1960's Bhubaneswar was developing into a town. In the 1980's Bhubaneswar became a full fledged congested city, replacing the forests of earlier times. Even in the 30's the area surrounding Bhubaneswar was a jungle and tigers used to be seen there frequently. The road from the

Swami Tejasananda remembered: "Maharaj went to South India, and towards the end of 1921 he returned to Bhubaneswar. In the middle of December I came to Bhubaneswar, where I hoped to stay with Maharaj during the Christmas. When I arrived at Bhubaneswar, Maharaj did not show the least sign of disapproval at my coming unannounced. I stayed with him four or five days and had a very happy time. There were

I had gone to Bhubaneswar particularly to consult Maharaj about my intention of joining the monastic order. One day I told him this. He listened and made a suggestion. I frankly told him why I could not follow it. He said, "All right, I will be in Calcutta in April. Come and see me there."

The Star Theatre once organized a charity show in aid of the Bhubaneswar Math.

One morning he started for his walk. He was alone with me that day. I was carrying his

Swami Shivananda: Swami Shivananda's natural inclination was towards solitude and meditation. But he was always ready to accept his share of duties which were assigned by the Math and Mission. In 1922,

after the death of Swami Brahmananda, he became the second president of the Order.

Swami Shivananda visited Odisha many times. He visited Puri in 1906. He visited Bhubaneswar twice in 1921, while going to and coming from Madras. He visited Bhubaneswar in 1923 to consecrate the new temple of Sri Ramakrishna. He visited Bhubaneswar in 1924 on the way to Madras and finally in 1926 he visited Bhubaneswar and Puri on the way to Madras. He was also fond of Bhubaneswar Ashrama like Swami Brahmananda.

It will be interesting to give here the gist of his letters written from Belur Math in the year 1917 regarding the proposed Bhubaneswar Ashrama. Swami Shivananda wrote, "Maharaj and Hari Maharaj are both still in holy Puri. They are not keeping well there. However, we hear that they will be leaving shortly for Bhubaneswar. Maharaj has long cherished a desire to have an Ashrama at Bhubaneswar. Bhubaneswar is first a large mango grove. Next, it is a holy place for the devotees of Shiva. Moreover, it is a very healthy place. Nothing can compare with its water. It comes from a clear spring. There the natural scenery is good. The peak of Khandagiri is very close. As far as I can tell, Maharaj's long cherished desire is now about to be fulfilled. A piece of land measuring 5 acres has been purchased; we got it very cheap. It costs us only Rs.400/-. Building materials and labour are both cheaper there than elsewhere. We expect the construction cost of the Ashrama building will not be too high ... Both Maharaj and Hari Maharaj are now in holy Puri. They will soon visit Bhubaneswar and lay the foundation stone of the new centre there and will start the construction work so that at least

a few rooms will be available at the earliest. I understand they are both better now. ... I have decided to go and stay with Maharaj for sometime at Bhubaneswar when he comes there."

On 1st April 1921, Mahapurush Maharaj accompanied Swami Brahmananda to Madras. On the way, they halted at Bhubaneswar Math for fifteen days. They left Bhubaneswar on 18th April 1921 for Waltair where they stayed for a week and reached Madras on 25th April 1921. On the way back they stopped at Bhubaneswar, as they had done before. They reached at Bhubaneswar Math on 21st November 1921 at midnight. They stayed there for two months and returned to Belur Math on 12th January 1922.

Swami Pavitrananda narrates about his visit to Bhubaneswar in the following words. During the Christmas holidays in 1921, I went to Bhubaneswar to see Maharaj and consult him about my desire to join the Order. After his tour in south India he arrived at Bhubaneswar and was staying there. When I arrived I found that the Mahapurush Maharaj also was there. He recognized me and was very pleased to see me. I was in Bhubaneswar for nearly a week. During my stay I seized every opportunity to accompany Mahapurush Maharaj on his morning and evening walks. While walking with him, I could talk with him very freely. At that time, the Non Cooperation Movement of Mahatma Gandhi was in full swing. There was great excitement all over the country. Hundreds and thousands of people, young and old, joined the movement. Though I wanted to join the Ramakrishna Order, I had great sympathy for those who dedicated themselves to the political movement. I greatly

While at Bhubaneswar one morning I went to see Khandagiri and Udaygiri, which were at a distance of six or seven miles. In the 8th and 9th centuries there were Buddhist and Jain monasteries at these places. Many monks had undergone severe austerities and spiritual practices there. The caves where they lived can still be seen. The same day I went with Mahapurush Maharaj on his walk. In the course of conversation he asked me what I felt at Khandagiri and Udaygiri. I said in reply, "in those places many monks underwent intense spiritual practices. They passed through many

The day before I left Bhubaneswar in the afternoon I told Mahapurush Maharaj that I will be leaving for Puri the next day on my way home. I don't know the reason why, but Mahapurush Maharaj asked me, "Do you believe in these things (meaning pilgrimages to sacred places) ?" In all frankness I told him, "To speak the truth, personally I have no great faith in them, but when I see that you and other revered Swamis believe in these things, I feel inclined to do so as you do." My answer did not annoy him in the least but rather he felt glad and said, "Yes, you are right, perfectly right." I was amazed to see his liberality and sympathy.

In 1922, Swami Brahmananda had expressed his desire to celebrate the **Vasanti Puja** in Bhubaneswar Math and at the same time to consecrate the newly built temple of Sri Ramakrishna on the first floor. But he passed away on 10th April 1922 after a short illness. To fulfil his last desire, in 1923 Mahapurush Maharaj after consulting with senior monks decided to celebrate Vasanti Puja (24th March

1923) and to consecrate newly built temple at Bhubaneswar. He came to Bhubaneswar accompanied by forty monks of Belur and nearby centres. It was a great occasion for Bhubaneswar Math. Many devotees Odisha came either by walk or by bullock cart and took part in celebration. On the day of Mahashtami after the special worship, Mahapurush Maharaj consecrated the temple by installing image of Sri Ramakrishna. On the day of Navami, Mahapurush Maharaj gave initiation to twenty two aspirants who came from Cuttack, Madhyamgram and other places. After sitting in the temple for two and half hours and giving initiation, when he came out of temple, his body was shaking in divine mood, his face radiant with divine joy, eyes half open. Somehow he came down to his room. Owing to the strain undergone by him during this consecration ceremony and initiation, his health broke down. He was not keeping well in Belur Math itself and it became worse due to travelling.

Inspite of his bad health, he participated in every function on this occasion. On the day of Navami, there was arrangement to feed around forty people, Daridranarayan Seva. In all, around seven thousand people took Prasad during this celebration event. On the day of Ekadasi, Mahapurush Maharaj ordained the Sannyasa to one brahmachari. During his stay there sometimes he used to go to Lingaraj temple with monks. One day he visited Rameshwar Shiva temple where he used to send offerings everyday. Mahapurush Maharaj was in Bhubaneswar for one and half month feeling the lively presence of Raja Maharaj and many devotees derived inspiration from him. He was not willing to return to Belur Math, but

owing to some important work he returned to Belur Math in the beginning of May 1923.

In 1924 on the way to south India, Mahapurush Maharaj stayed at Bhubaneswar. Swami Brahmeswarananda narrates : Probably, it was an auspicious occasion of Guru Purnima. Myself and three more brahmacharins requested Mahapurush Maharaj for Sannyasa. Accordingly Mahapurush Maharaj ordained us with Sannyasa. There were a few dilapidated Shiva temples near Lingaraj temple. According to the names of four deities of these temples our names were **Megheswarananda, Kapileswarananda, Bhaskareshwarananda, Brahmeswarananda**. Then he said, "A monk is like Lord Shiva. Now these monks are like living Shiva and will accept the worship from the people." He had a different vision, he used to see infinite in finite, an ocean in a drop. He used to awaken God-consciousness in the minds of the people. One day in the context of the worship of Sri Ramakrishna, he told me, "I wish, you become desireless by doing the worship of Sri Ramakrishna." Regarding the dinner he said that a monk should have light food at night. As the householders have to work hard whole day, they take sumptuous dinner at night.

Tarasundari was a famous actress of the Bengali stage. Swami Bhaskareswarananda narrates his reminiscences: Though an epitome of purity, Swami Shivananda never hated the sinner. Tarasundari was a concubine of the famous dramatist Apareshbabu. Once she was enacting the part of Ramanuja in a play. Swami Brahmananda and others were invited to see that play. She was coming to Swami Brahmananda to have his blessings before every

entry. She was so much absorbed in the part of Ramanuja and so deeply influenced by it that it brought about far-reaching change in her life.

When Mahapurush Maharaj became the President of the Ramakrishna Order, Tarasundari came to Belur Math to meet him. She sent a word for him. Mahapurush Maharaj himself came downstairs to receive her. Mahapurush Maharaj took her upstairs and talked with her for quite a long time. It had a very positive effect on her life. Afterwards she used to tell that from that day her life was changed for the better. Then she left Calcutta and settled down in Bhubaneswar. She built a house there and named it 'Rakhal Kunj'. She went to Belur Math to request Mahapurush Maharaj to come to Bhubaneswar for Vastu puja, ceremony. Mahapurush Maharaj gave his consent and went to Bhubaneswar. I was also there in Bhubaneswar at that time. With the consent of Mahapurush Maharaj, the Hom fire was lighted for Vastu puja and the mantras were chanted. In the process she was asked about her gotra (lineage). She felt very sad and burst into tears. She told Mahapurush Maharaj that she was leading such a life that there was no question of having a gotra. Mahapurush Maharaj sat in solemn silence and said, "Oh Tara, who says that you are impure ? I see the Divine Mother in you. You are my mother and you belong to my gotra." It consoled her immensely and she became happy. The ceremony was over smoothly and peacefully.

On the request of many centres from south India, Mahapurush Maharaj and Swami Sharvananda together with several other monks started for Madras on 7th April 1924. They broke their journey at Bhubaneswar for two days. He enjoyed the pleasant surroundings and

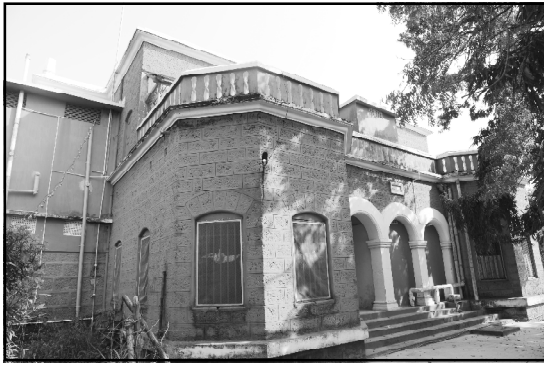
environment of Bhubaneswar Math. On the third day an incident happened while he was going to Railway station for Madras. In those days motor car was not so common. So the Head of Bhubaneswar centre had arranged for a horse carriage. Mahapurush Maharaj along with a few monks were going to the railway station in a horse carriage in the morning. But the horse, instead of going towards the station started going in opposite direction. Coach man tried his best but could not control the horse. So the carriage toppled and fell in a ditch by the side of the road. All other monks came running to bring it on track and takeout the monks inside the coach. Mahapurush Maharaj was safe and he started going towards the station by walk. Others in the coach suffered a few injuries but there was no time even for first aid. Other monks started whispering that due to holy company of Mahapurush Maharaj they had been saved. While talking about this incident, Mahapurush Maharaj one day said, "The horse was intelligent, it knew that it will be put to hardship and so it tried to escape. Who wants to do hard work ?" Then he became serious and said, "If Krishna wants to save who can kill and if Krishna wants to kill who can save? Thakur is the only saviour."

On 2nd May 1926 he started with few monks to Madras. On the way he stayed in Bhubaneswar Math for five days. He felt very comfortable in Bhubaneswar Math started by Raja Maharaj. While staying there one day he went to Puri to have the darshan of Lord Jagannath. On that day, he became ready quite early in the morning and was sitting in southern veranda. In course of conversation he said to the monks present there, "The images in the Puri Temple, Jagannath, Subhadra and Balaram

The moment he entered the Jagannath Temple at Puri, he was engrossed in the divine

Mahapurush Maharaj instructed someone to give the pandas some money. After the darshan he came out of temple, sat in a

rickshaw and returned to the Math via Bindu Sarovar. About 10 in the morning he gave initiation to spiritual aspirants. After his evening stroll he sat in veranda and addressed the devotees. He told that one has to take out sometime for spiritual practices from the whirlpool of the world, otherwise our life will become as that of an animal. When you have taken initiation you have to spare sometime for Japam and meditation. On 7th May 1926, Friday in afternoon at 2:30 p.m. he boarded a train for Waltair and after a short stay there, he reached Madras on 11th May 1926.



Shivananda Smriti Kutir, Guest House

Swami Shivananda gave initiation to the Queen of Balangir Patna (princess of Mayurbhanja). The Garden-house, now called **Shivananda Smriti Kutir** (Guest House) building looks like a palace which was constructed by her with a desire that she would stay there till her last and then it would be donated to Bhubaneswar Math. She made a separate shrine in adjacent room and installed a beautiful statue of Swami Shivananda in meditation. Simple worship with flowers, incense sticks etc. is performed in that shrine even today.

Swami Saradananda: Swami Saradananda is popularly known as Sharat

Maharaj. He carried the heavy responsibility of the Ramakrishna Movement for over thirty years. One day at Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna sat upon his lap in an ecstatic mood and Latu said that he was testing how much weight Sharat could bear. With the vision of a seer Swami Vivekananda also knew the potential of Swami Saradananda and made him the General Secretary of Ramakrishna Math and Mission. And he carried this responsibility for nearly three decades.

As per the record, Swami Saradananda visited Puri seven times and Bhubaneswar three times. He visited Puri in March 1887 for about six months (on their return journey he visited Bhubaneswar and Kothar), in November 1888 for two months, in November 1904, in March 1913 till July 1913 for 5 months, in 1915 for ten days, in October 1917 and June 1925 for nine weeks and then he stayed in Bhubaneswar for two weeks. He came to Bhubaneswar in February 1920 for about ten days and November 1924 for around 35 days.

After Sri Ramakrishna's Birthday celebration in March 1887, Saradananda went with Premananda and Abhedananda on a pilgrimage to Puri, a place sacred to Lord Jagannath. In those days steamer would go only upto Chandbali and thence one had to go to Cuttack by bullock cart. At Cuttack they met two brothers of Balaram Bose. One of them, Harivallabha Basu, who gave them a letter of introduction in the name of the Mahanta of Emmar Math at Puri. From Cuttack, they came to Puri on foot. After a few days of travel, Swami Saradananda's mind was filled with pangs of separation from Sri Ramakrishna and he became weary. He remembered his days with Sri Ramakrishna and love of Sri

After the Mahasamadhi of Holy Mother and Swami Brahmananda Swami Saradananda did not take much interest in work, but still in the year 1923 under his leadership the temple of Holy mother was consecrated at Joyrambati. Due to old age and lack of vigour he suffered from many diseases. So doctors and others requested him to go to Bhubaneswar for change of climate. So he left for Bhubaneswar on 12th November 1924 along with Swami Nirmalananda, Shankarananda, Vaikunthnath Sanyal and attendant Swami Aseshananda. He wrote to one person on 30th November 1924, "This morning I had been to Bhubaneswar temple (Lingaraj). After having the darshan of

Swami Aseshananda narrates in his reminiscences about Swami Saradananda: At Bhubaneswar Math my duty was to draw water from the well and pour it into the 'Kunjo', a porous mud vessel, for Swami's drinking purpose. One day while I was carrying the vessel by its slender elongated neck, the vessel slipped from my hand, broke, bottom falling out and spilling the water. It was a real mess. The water soaked the white linen sheet and the mattress on which the Swami was seated reading his correspondence. I was very much afraid thinking that perhaps he would be so angry that he would not allow me to serve him anymore. It would have been a great blow to my heart to be denied of the privilege. I prayed to Sri Ramakrishna to forgive me and to intercede in this matter. Seeing my gloomy face Swami Saradananda said, "Why are you so sad! This water pot will go its way alone; it will not have cholera or typhoid. Don't worry I am going for a walk. You take the mattress upstairs

and put it in the sun on the roof of the porch. The sun is bright and scorching today, within half an hour the mattress will be dry. You bring it back to my room and all will be well." My heart brightened; I followed the Swamiji's instructions meticulously, and everything was perfect.

On 6th February 1920 he came to Bhubaneswar Math along with Vaikunthnath Sanyal to meet Swami Brahmananda. He informed everything to Raja Maharaj regarding the Kashi Sevashrama. After staying there for ten days he returned to Calcutta on 17th February 1920.

After finishing his Mission work he started again for Puri and reached there on 17th June 1925. There he stayed at Shashi Niketan. When the Rathas came near, he had the darshan of Lord Jagannath. He pulled the ropes of all the three chariots one after another. He was very happy at that time though his health was not so good. During this period there were around 20 to 22 people including monks from Bhubaneswar Math. After Ratha Yatra, he left Puri for Bhubaneswar on 24th August 1925 and stayed in the Math for two weeks and left for Calcutta on 6th September 1925.

Swami Abhedananda : Swami Abhedananda was popularly known as Kali Maharaj. When he came in contact with Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar, the latter advised him to meditate on Kali, the Divine Mother. He began to practise spiritual discipline under the Master's guidance. He received ochre cloth and rosary from the Master. After the Master's passing away, he spent a number of years in travelling the places of pilgrimage until Swami Vivekananda called him to west in 1896. He visited Odisha twice in 1887 and

1906. During his first visit to Odisha in 1887, he visited Cuttack, Puri, Konark, Chilika Lake, Udaygiri-Khandagiri, Bhubaneswar and Kothar. During his second visit to Odisha in 1906, he visited Puri and Berhampur in Ganjam District.



Swami Abhedanandaji Maharaj

"In the year 1887 (March)", writes Swami Abhedananda, "I along with Sarat and Baburam started for Puri."

They spent six months at Puri and, during this period, two of his companions Baburam and Sharat were laid down with typhoid and dysentery, and as soon as they recovered, the party left Puri for Bhubaneswar where they put up at the house of a Panda (a class of people who guide and help the pilgrims). "After spending a few days here", writes Swami Abhedananda, "we felt a strong desire to visit the ancient Buddhist caves at Khandagiri and Udaygiri and so we proceeded towards that place." From the description of this journey as given by Swami Abhedananda we learn that his love for places of historical interest was as genuine as his love for the Divine; the account he has left behind bears ample testimony to it. The whole of the journey lay through thick

When they failed to find out a single Buddhist monk anywhere there, the guide informed them of one hermit who lived inside the deep forest on the top of the hill. This aroused their curiosity and they wanted to look out for the hermit. Baburam, however, did not want to accompany them this time and he remained at the foot of this hill waiting for the return of his brother-monks. "Sharat and myself then started for the destination being escorted by our guide. As we reached the hilltop, we looked around the jungle and all on a sudden we found ourselves standing before a large cave. We felt a strong desire to enter inside it, but as soon as we reached the entrance, we found much to our awe and wonder the footprints of a tiger on the sand instead of those

The account as given by the boy aroused their curiosity and both of them, Kali Tapasvi and Sharat wanted to taste the milk of the tigress and they then requested the collector to part with some of it. The boy at once put a cube or two of the milk collected by him on the palm of each of the monks which they tasted and found it emanating a strong and stinking odour of the body of a tigress. Then they came down, collecting a bit of the frozen milk on a leaf to show it to Baburam who was waiting for them anxiously. As he got sight of his brother monks, Baburam was very much relieved of his anxiety and at the same time he was very much surprised as well as glad to find the rare specimen with them. Thereafter they returned to Bhubaneswar in company of their guide.

1887 took the ochre clothes that the master
had given him.



Swami Akhandananda visited Odisha twice. In 1906 he visited Puri and most probably Kothar. In the second visit in 1924, he visited Puri and Bhubaneswar and stayed there for more than two months. In 1924, he came to Ramakrishna Math, Bhubaneswar for few days. While there he wrote in a letter: "After the continuous roar of the ocean and the howling of the winds, it seems I have come to a lonely and silent forest." At Bhubaneswar, one day Swami Akhandananda visited Rakhal Kunj and remarked: "Mother Tara, what is this ? The Master looks emaciated. Don't you offer cooked food ?" Ashamed of her sinful life, Tara replied, "No Swami." Swami Akhandananda advised her to offer cooked food and milk to the master every day. As Tara listened to the advice of a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, tears came to her eyes.

Swami Premananda: Swami Premananda's pre-monastic name was Baburam Ghosh. When he came to Sri Ramakrishna for the first time, Sri Ramakrishna subjected him to certain physical tests as he

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celebration, Swami Premananda accompanied by Swamis Abhedananda and Saradananda, went to Puri for pilgrimage and stayed there for six months in Emmar Monastery. They lived on the prasad of Jagannath, practised spiritual disciplines most of the times, and attended Chariot Festival of Jagannath. Although during his student days Baburam had done physical exercises to strengthen his body and to withstand hardships, yet his delicate body could not stand excessive austerities. After undergoing the strain of severe tapasya for more than a month at Puri, Swami Premananda had an attack of typhoid and became bedridden. His brother disciples took him to Balaram Bose's Kshetrabasir Math. He recovered quickly by the service and care of brother disciples.



He visited Odisha many times. He visited Bhadrak, Kothar, Puri, Bhubaneswar, Chilika Lake, Konark and Udaygiri-Khandagiri. He went to Puri itself eight times in his life. In 1887 he went to Puri with Swamis Saradananda and Abhedananda. When Holy Mother went for the second time to Puri in 1904 he was included in her party. In 1906 he went to Puri twice via Bhadrak. In 1907 he had visited Puri twice, as is known from his two letters to Shashi Maharaj. In 1915, he went to Puri and stayed with Swami Brahmananda. In 1916, he again went to Puri.

On their return journey they visited the Sun Temple of Konark, Lake Chilika, the Lingaraj Shiva Temple in Bhubaneswar, the Buddhist caves of Udaygiri-Khandagiri, Ashoka's stone edict at Dhauli Mountain. Apart from these places, they went to Sakshigopal near Puri. Then they went to Kothar to meet Nimai Babu, nephew of Balaram Babu and returned to Calcutta from Cuttack by launch. They returned to Baranagore at the end of August 1887.

We learn from two letters written by Baburam Maharaj to Shashi Maharaj from Puri "I shall be highly obliged if you ask the devotee Alasinga to send a few books by Swamiji. I feel like reading as I am now staying alone." (Letter from Puri, 5th May 1907)

"At the request of Maharaj, I came here last Saturday. I believe that by next Sunday, Maharaj and others will have to proceed to Calcutta. In between there is a proposal to stay at Bhubaneswar and Bhadrak for a few days.

This house has been given on rent to Maharaja of Jaipur for three months from 1st December. You may please write at the address of Kothar in care of Ram." (Letter from Puri, 27th November 1907)



Swami Adbhutanandaji Maharaj

Swami Adbhutananda: Swami Adbhutananda's premonastic name was Rakhturam. He was born in Chhapra district of Bihar in a poor family and lost his parents in childhood. He did not receive any formal education. He came to Calcutta with his uncle and worked in the house of Dr. Ramachandra Dutta, a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, who brought him to the Master. After the passing away of the Master, Latu Maharaj accompanied Holy Mother to Vrindaban. Between 1886 and 1912, he almost stayed in Calcutta except on few occasions when he visited the places of pilgrimage. He spent the last eight years of his mortal life in the holy city of Varanasi. He visited Odisha on two different occasions in 1895 and in 1903.

Swami Adbhutananda visited several places of pilgrimages in different parts of India. Sometime in the year 1895, Swami Adbhutananda went to Puri by Steamer

accompanied by a devotee. They went to Shashi Niketan at Puri. Harivallabha Babu who was there at that time became very happy and received them very cordially. He made all the arrangements of their stay and visit to temples. He then visited Bhubaneswar and went to Harivallabha Bose's house at Cuttack. He stayed there for a long time and afterwards returned to Calcutta. Sri Upen Mukherjee, the owner of Basumati Magazine had paid the fare of the steamer.



Swami Vijnananandaji Maharaj

Swami Vijnanananda: Swami Vijnanananda before he took orders, was known by the name of Hariprasanna Chattopadhyaya. He was born on 30th October 1868 in Etawah. In 1896, he left his job and joined Alambazar monastery. Swami Vijnanananda visited Odisha twice in 1925 and 1935. In Odisha he visited Bhubaneswar, Konark and Puri.

In 1925, Swami Vijnanananda went on a pilgrimage to Odisha. By that time, the first centre of Ramakrishna Math in Odisha has been started at Bhubaneswar by Swami Brahmananda. It was December 1925 when

Swami Vijnanananda visited Bhubaneswar Math. In 1935 Swami Vijnanananda went to see the famous Lingaraj Temple in Bhubaneswar. He then visited Sun Temple at Konark. On another occasion he visited the Jagannath Temple of Puri. Swami Vijnanananda started for Bhubaneswar Math from Belur Math on 14 March 1935 along with Swami Shankarananda and Satyamatmananda by Puri Express. They reached Bhubaneswar next morning. Swami Vijnanananda was very happy to see Bhubaneswar Math. He said that Raja Maharaj liked this place very much. He stayed in the guest house which was built by the Queen of Balangir Patna, who was initiated by Swami Shivananda. He was in Bhubaneswar for 3 days.



Swami Subodhanandaji Maharaj

Swami Subodhananda: Swami Subodhananda whose premonastic name was Subodh Chandra Ghosh met Sri Ramakrishna in August 1855. As he was youngest among the brother monks he was commonly known as Khoka Maharaj. He went in 1897 to Puri on the way to South India, in 1908 to Chilika region, in 1915 to Kothar, in 1921, 1924, 1926, 1929 and 1932 to Bhubaneswar.

In the year 1908 there was a famine in Chilika area. There was an utter wail among the people because of famine. Swami Subodhananda was sent for relief work accompanied by Swami Shankarananda. Subodhananda threw himself heart and soul into the relief work. He collected and distributed rice, lentils, and clothes among the famine stricken people. He worked day and night without caring for his own food or rest, and became sick as a result. Sri Ramakrishna appeared before him and said, "You will not have to do this work anymore." However, Subodhananda continued the relief work until the condition of the people improved. During that period Chilika area was very hot. There was not much to eat for these people except Chuda (flatten rice) and jaggery. Water was also not good; it was salty. But they never cared for their own welfare. One day Shankarananda became unconscious due to sunstroke. He was in that state for six days. Swami Subodhananda was very much worried about him. After taking some rest in a nearby village he recovered his health and joined his duty again. Seeing his sincere and expertise work style, Swami Subodhananda became very happy.

A few incidents of this period will be worth mentioning here. A certain young Irish local government officer used to come often and enquire about the progress of relief work. Once clothes were sent from Calcutta for distribution but delivery of goods was not possible due to the lack of receipt. The officer himself went to the railway station and brought the clothes which made timely distribution possible. Some clothes sent from Calcutta by rail were found stolen on the way. Many people advised Subodhananda to demand for

Swami Sambuddhananda narrates his reminiscences while he was at Belur Math: On 20th March 1924, in the course of a conversation, Khoka Maharaj told Mahapurush Maharaj about an incident told by Durgapada at Bhubaneswar : "A devotee who was a Deputy Magistrate used to worship till 11 o'clock in the morning. One day the Magistrate had come to inspect his office while the Deputy was engaged in the worship at his house. All the necessary documents were presented to the Magistrate by someone looking exactly like the Deputy. The Magistrate was satisfied and gave favourable comments. When this was happening, the Deputy was still engaged in worship. After finishing the worship, the deputy rushed to the office. On Seeing him the orderly said, "Sir, you had come earlier to show the necessary papers to the Magistrate. Why then have you come again?" Then the Deputy went to meet the Magistrate. He also asked the Deputy why he had come again. He

Brahmachari Manindra (Swami Sadatmananda) in his reminiscences wrote: "When Khoka Maharaj was in Bhubaneswar, he used to go for a walk in jungle. There grew a kind of fruit in a thorny tree. He used to pluck these fruits, and eat them like a small child and would give the fruits to us also. Sometimes he used to suddenly sit inside the bush which would make small birds to fly out with noise. This was his daily routine. ...Once he was coming to Bhubaneswar from Puri in the hot afternoon. There was neither any porter nor any vehicle at the station. So he came to the Math from the railway station by walk with his bedding. Such was his simplicity that he would never let us feel that he was a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. We were afraid of Mahapurush Maharaj and Sharat Maharaj, but we were very comfortable with Khoka Maharaj as he used to mix freely with us. He used to take food with us. He had very little bedding. He used to use hand as his pillows.

and dancing in the same way. Without disturbing her sadhana, Swami Subodhananda returned to the monastery.

Sannyasini Gauri-Ma

Sannyasini Gauri-Ma: Gauri-Ma was born in 1857 in Sibpur of District Howrah of the present West Bengal. She was called Mridani. She came to Dakshineswar and believed that it was Sri Chaitanya Dev who had incarnated in the person of Sri Ramakrishna. During her stay at Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna gave her ochre cloth. Later Sri Ramakrishna introduced her to Holy mother. Since then Gauri-Ma also became known as Gauri Dasi.

It is hard for a person to live in one place who has gotten the taste of freedom in a wandering life. Moreover, comforts and an easygoing life are impediments to monastic life. One day Gauri-Ma told her mother that she was going to Puri to visit Lord Jagannath and that she would return soon. Thus, Gauri-Ma left home again. From Puri she went to Sakshigopal, Alarnath, and Bhubaneswar, and she also visited some monasteries at this time. She came to Odisha with a group of pilgrims. After having the darshan of Khirchora Gopinath at Remuna, she arrived at

Bhubaneswar and stayed there for some time. She spent her time in meditation and worship of Lord Shiva. Later she visited Khandagiri and Udaygiri and meditated there. From there she went to Sakshigopal and then reached Puri.

When construction of Bhubaneswar Math was going on, Swami Brahmananda had invited Gauri-Ma and made all arrangements for her stay in an adjacent house. When she reached there Raja Maharaj became very happy. He himself took her around Bhubaneswar Math and later explained to her about the layout of the Math. Gauri-Ma was very fond of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, especially of Raja Maharaj.

Once Zamindar Hariprasad Basu took Gauri-Ma to his village in Cuttack district of Odisha. Some women monks and brahmacharinis accompanied her. Local devotees arranged the function and a large quantity of Payas was cooked by Gauri-Ma herself and offered to Lord Damodar. Simple villagers were greatly inspired by her.

Laxmi Didi: Lakshminani Didi was a niece of Sri Ramakrishna. Her father Rameshwar Chattopadhyay was Sri Ramakrishna's second elder brother. She had two brothers, Ramlal and Shivram. She was married at the age of 11 in a Vaishnavite family. A couple of months after her marriage, her husband came to meet her at Kamarpukur. Then he left in search of work and never returned. Thus ended her household life. She went to Dakshineswar to give company to Sarada Devi.



Laxmi Didi

After the passing away of the Master, Lakshmi travelled with Holy Mother to different places of pilgrimage. At the end of November 1904 the proposal for Holy Mother's going to Puri took shape. The Bengal Nagpur railway had by this time been completed. The Mother travelled in a reserved second-class compartment with Nilmadhav, the mad aunt, Golap-Ma, Laxmi Didi, Radhu, Master Mahashaya's wife, Chunilalbabu's wife and Kusumkumari. Swami Premananda and two devotees got into an inter class compartment.

From Puri they all went to Bhubaneswar by the 'Sikshala' train. They stayed in the house of Brahmin Panda of the Lingaraj Temple, Ishwar Shringari who met them at the station and took them to his house. After taking dip in Bindusagar they all went to Lingaraj Temple. They all meditated after performing the puja. Again the party went to Gauri Kund and took bath. Next day all went to Khandagiri and Udaygiri.



Swami Tannishthananda is a monk of Ramakrishna order currently serving at Ramakrishna Math, Nagpur, Maharastra