

Swami Atmajnanananda

(Revered Swami Atmajnanananda is the spiritual head of the Vedanta Center of Greater Washington, DC. As a part of the 40th year celebrations of Vidyapith, Swamiji was invited to visit Vivekananda Vidyapith to give a talk on November 12, 2016. Swami Atmajnanananda gave his blessings in the morning assembly and in the evening he spoke on the "Teachings of Holy Mother". The following writeup has been prepared for publication from a video recording of the Swamiji's lectures.)

Morning Blessing

I will just say a few words because Swami Sarvadevananda spoke so nicely. We hesitate to give blessings because we think Sri Ramakrishna is the one to give blessings. But we have so much goodwill and prayer and hope for all of you. One of Sri Ramakrishna's direct disciples, Mahapurush Maharaj (Swami Shivananda) was asked often by people to bless them. He said he has nothing but blessings. We cannot say it exactly the same way, but we have nothing but goodwill, best wishes and prayers that this institution continues. It is such an inspiration and joy.

This is my second visit to Vidyapith. You will see me again in January. I just wanted to add one thing that you should all understand: it is a tremendous privilege and grace to come to the feet of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda and their direct disciples and to have this wonderful ideal. But there is also responsibility that comes with it. People will judge Sri Ramakrishna, they will judge Holy Mother, and they will judge Swami Vivekananda by our behavior. If people see us going to Vidyapith but telling lies and cheating, then they will think that these ideals can't be very great. Thus, we have a responsibility to live up to the highest ideals, so when others see us they say that these people have been inspired by the highest ideals, so they must be great ideals. People do not have time to read all books, but they see those of us who are following Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda. We have to carry the torch. We have to keep high standards in our lives.

Look at Swami Vivekananda's highest ideals, say, in Karma Yoga. Not just selfless work, but seeing God in all, and doing everything to the highest degree of perfection as possible. We have a very high standard to aim for that way. Regarding the harmony of religions, if we want all to respect the highest ideals of Sri Ramakrishna and all his various sadhanas, we have to show respect to all religions. We have this responsibility to live the highest ideals of all the four Yogas. This will spread the glory of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda. That will be good for us too, striving for our own liberation and seeing God in all and working for all others. It is not just the selfish spiritual ideal. Along with our liberation, we work for the upliftment of the society as well.

I add my prayers and best wishes along with Swami Sarvadevanandaji that this institution continues to grow and serve many people and be a model for other groups. Uncle (Dr. Mahendra Jani) knows that when someone asks me for advice to start something like this, I

ask them to call Uncle. This is such a wonderful ideal. Not a single one of our centers run by any of our Swamis have been able to do what you have done here. People often say, 'We are only householders. What can we do?' But you have done far more in this field than any of us. So it is a great privilege and joy to be here. My love and best wishes and prayers are for all of you individually, and for the institution to grow. Thank you.