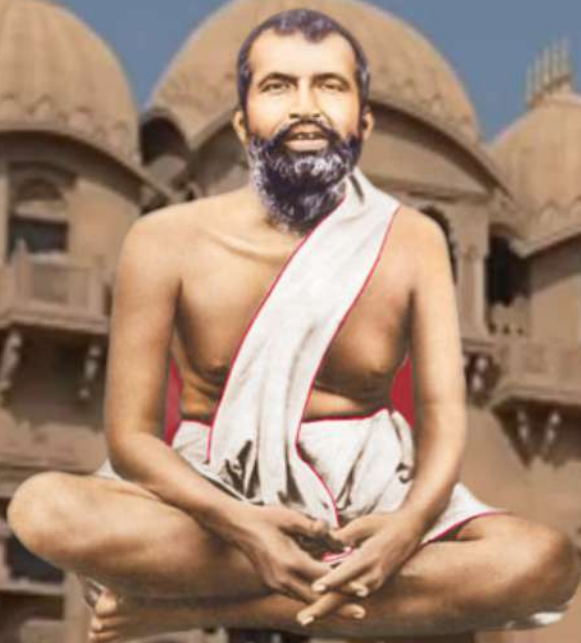


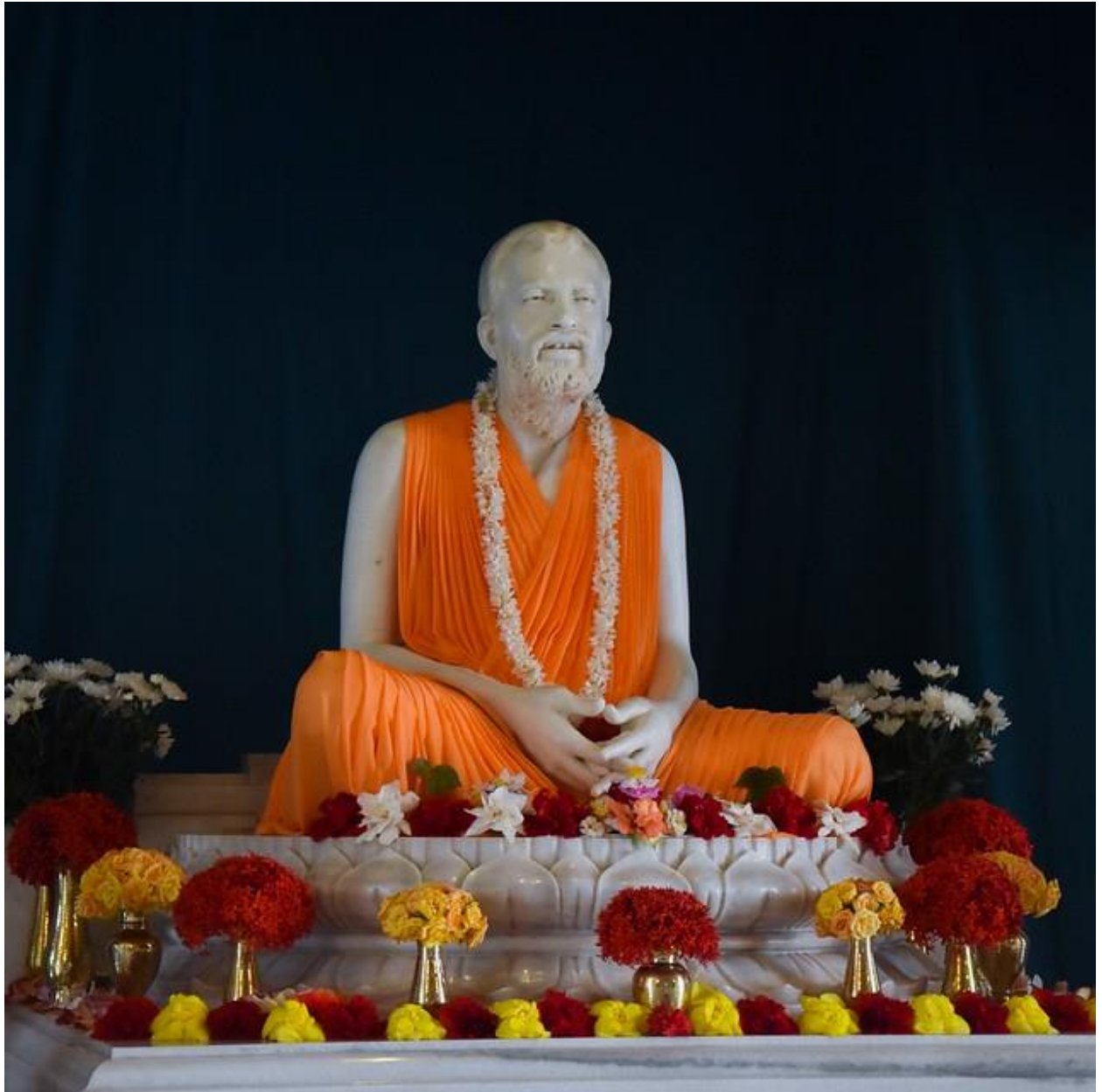


FREE



# Gurushakti in the Ramakrishna Order

**SWAMI VEDANISHTHANANDA**



The world is water and the mind milk. If you pour milk into water they become one; you cannot find the pure milk any more. But turn the milk into curd and churn it into butter. Then, when that butter is placed in water, it will float. So, practise spiritual discipline in solitude and obtain the butter of knowledge and love. Even if you keep that butter in the water of the world the two will not mix. The butter will float.

— Sri Ramakrishna

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SWAMI VEDANISHTHANANDA

**S**ri Sri Guru Purnima! It is the auspicious day when the guru – the teacher is

adored and worshipped by his disciples. It is celebrated on the full moon day of the lunar month of *Ashadha* (roughly corresponding to July). The scriptures say, “*Acharyadevo Bhava*”, thereby exhorting us to regard the teacher as the veritable form of the Lord. And especially the spiritual teacher, by long tradition, is treated as ‘God in person!’ Guru Purnima is celebrated in temples, ashramas, and religious congregations all over India. All the centres of the Ramakrishna Order observe this sacred day with great festivity.

Thousands of initiated devotees eagerly look forward to this day when they can worship their guru, the one who blessed them by imparting them the *Ishta Mantra Diksha*. In the Ramakrishna Order the *Diksha Gurus* are - the *Sangha Guru*, who is the President and spiritual head of the Ramakrishna Order, the Vice-presidents living in different branch centres in India, and some senior resident swamis of the Order’s centres in foreign countries. On Guru Purnima day thousands of devotees gather at Belur Math and at the centres where the Vice-presidents live, to offer their *guru-pranams*. Even those devotees whose guru is no longer in mortal form, come to offer their pranams to the present *Sangha Guru*.

An important aspect of Guru Purnima in the Ramakrishna Order is that while the devotees offer their respects to their guru, the special *Guru Puja* is offered only to Sri Ramakrishna, the Lord worshipped in the temple! This may appear a little confusing to some new devotees who see Sri Ramakrishna as their *Ishta Devata* and the swami who gave them the Mantra Diksha as their guru. This tradition of the Ramakrishna Order has its roots in the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna himself.

## Gurushakti

Sri Ramakrishna says, “*Sat-chit-ananda* is the only Guru!” In this sense, the guru is actually the manifestation of the Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient Spirit which is of the nature of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute! In other words, the guru is not a person, but a power, a *Shakti*.

While it is true that it is the Shakti which is manifesting in and through every being in this world, the guru is a special medium of manifestation. This is understood by a conversation between Sri Ramakrishna and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, the great educationist and reformist. Their interaction on 5 August 1882 is recorded thus in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*:

*Sri Ramakrishna: Just see how picturesque this universe is! How many things there are! The sun, moon, and stars; and how many varieties of living beings! – big and small, good and bad, strong and weak – some endowed with more power, some with less.*

*Vidyasagar: Has he endowed some with more power and others with less?*

*Sri Ramakrishna: As the All-pervading Spirit He exists in all beings, even in the ant. But the manifestations of His Power are different in different beings; otherwise, how can one person put ten to flight, while another can’t face even one? And why do all people respect you?*

*Have you grown a pair of horns? You have more compassion and learning. Therefore, people honour you and come to pay you their respects. Don't you agree with me?*

### **Who can be a Guru?**

Having reached the goal of spiritual life on the strength of long and intense spiritual practices, the guru becomes competent to guide other spiritual seekers. The scriptures point out three main characteristics of a guru. He should be *Shrotriya*, i.e., he should have the knowledge of the essence of the scriptures. He should be *Avrijina*, i.e., his conduct should be above reproach. He should live strictly in conformity with the scriptural ideal. And finally, he should be *Akamahata*, i.e., his relation with his disciple should not have any kind of selfish motive.

### **How to be a disciple?**

As in the case of receiving any kind of knowledge, certain preparations are necessary to receive the spiritual blessings of a guru. The Bhagavad Gita states that a spiritual seeker must approach the guru with a one-pointed mind, a spirit of humility, repeatedly question him to clarify doubts, serve him with selfless devotion, and thus purify mind and body to receive and assimilate the guru's spiritual instructions.

Sri Ramakrishna gives a beautiful simile to explain how a disciple should be: With its mouth open, the oyster eagerly waits for a drop of rain falling during the ascendance of the *Swati* constellation. When the rain drop enters its mouth, the oyster closes its mouth, goes to the bottom of the ocean and turns it into a pearl. Blessings from a guru are just like this drop of water in association with the star *Swati*. Before receiving the spiritual instructions from the guru, the disciple must develop great yearning, and then, like the oyster, keep his heart open to receive that Truth.

### **Gurushakti in the Ramakrishna Order**

In the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, as the Ramakrishna Order is officially named, Sri Ramakrishna is the centre and the circumference. He is all; and all are in Him. He is the manifestation of the *Sat-Chit-Ananda* in the form of the *Yugavatara*, the incarnation of the Age. He is the *Ishta* and the guru; both in one. The Presidents and Vice-presidents of the Order are instruments and channels for the manifestation of the power called Sri Ramakrishna.

### **The Parampara**

In the Ramakrishna Order, the *Gurushakti* is connected to the eternal divine lineage of the Gurushakti. Swami Premeshanandaji, a disciple of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi explains it thus: Sri Ramakrishna was formally initiated by Tota Puri who was a sannyasi of the *Puri Sampradaya*, one of the *Dashanami Sampradayas* (ten branches) started by Adi Shankaracharya; Adi Shankaracharya was the disciple of Govindapada who was the disciple of Gaudapada who in turn was one of the Vedic Rishis belonging to the *Brahma Vidya Sampradaya* of Sanaka, Sanatana, Sananda and Sanatkumara; these four were the *Manasputras* or spiritual sons of Brahma, and Brahma was born from the navel of Narayana, the Eternal Godhead.

Based on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, who incarnated to revive and re-establish *Sanatana Dharma* or the Eternal Religion, his spiritual consort Sri Sarada Devi and his monastic direct disciples gave a concrete shape to the ideas and ideals of the Ramakrishna Order; and this has been followed and passed on by the later gurus of the

Order. The spiritual power of Sri Ramakrishna has come down to us through three channels – his Shakti Sri Sarada Devi, his foremost disciple Swami Vivekananda, and his fifteen other monastic disciples. Though some of these monastic disciples did not impart formal *mantra diksha*, their life and teachings have inspired thousands of spiritual seekers. The later Presidents and the Vice-presidents of the Order are connected to Sri Ramakrishna through one or the other of these three channels.

### **Is the guru eternal?**

Does one's guru cease to exist after his physical death? Swami Premeshanandaji explains this wonderfully with a simile. In the autumn season, every year the Divine Mother is worshipped for five days in her form as Durga with great festivity and grandeur. When worshipping the clay image of the Divine Mother, the devotees feel and adore the presence of the Divine Mother in the image. And when the worship is over, they immerse the image in the water. It is as if the Eternal Divine Mother took the form of an image temporarily to accept the worship of Her devotees and after the worship the form again merged into the formless, the Infinite. The next year, the devotees worship the Divine Mother in another new image and it continues likewise.

### **Diksha Guru and the Sangha Guru**

One day, Swamiji was sitting on the veranda below the shrine and Swami Brahmananda, the President of the Order, was standing behind him. Swami Achalananda, a monastic disciple of Swamiji was passing through the courtyard. Seeing him, Swamiji said, "Come here, and bring some flowers." When Achalananda brought the flowers, Swamiji said to him, "Put these flowers at my feet and worship me daily." Achalananda offered all the flowers at his Master's feet. Again Swamiji said, "Go and bring some more flowers." Achalananda returned with more flowers, and Swamiji said, "Now worship the President of the Order. Remember, the President and the Guru are one."

So, the Gurushakti of Sri Ramakrishna, the veritable manifestation of the Eternal Godhead, is manifested chiefly through the Sangha Guru and other gurus of the Ramakrishna Order through time. When their bodies perish, new Swamis take their place and the spiritual lineage continues.







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## Book From **SARADA KUTI**

SWAMI VEDANISHTHANANDA