



Svaroopā® Vidya Ashram

The Yoga of Money #2

Acknowledging Leadership & Support

By Swami Nirmalananda

The first time I went to Calcutta, I was surprised at my own tears. Now I know to expect them. They are so sweet: hot tears of heartfelt gratitude to the man who sent the first yogi to teach Americans.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa was one of the greatest mystics of the 19th century. He lived and worked at Dakshineswar, a big Kali temple. Sincere seekers found their way to him; they sat at his feet for years, eventually becoming swamis. One of them was Swami Vivekananda.

In 1893, Swami Vivekananda crashed the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. Uninvited, he showed up in flaming orange robes with a flamboyant turban, and brought the entire audience to their feet in a standing ovation with his simple greeting, “My fellow brothers and sisters.” It was more than his words that galvanized them – it was his presence. After the Parliament, he traveled around the USA, teaching in many cities and establishing the Vedanta Society, still going strong today.

I had read this history and seen poorly reproduced black & white photos in old falling-apart books from India. The photos showed Vivekananda with his turban, plus earlier photos of him with Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar. The turrets of the 12 Shiva temples lined up along the Ganga River were striking, as well as the dome over the main Kali temple. I read the books, saw the photos, and then forgot them.

Until the moment that I stepped foot inside the temple grounds. My tour guide was quite surprised at my overwhelm! He had an agenda of things I should see. I was following along, grateful for his knowledge of the city and the holy sites I had asked to see. And then I was sitting on the ground, crying uncontrollably, in great bliss.

When I saw those 12 Shiva temples, all those poor-quality photos came back to me, only now they were alive. I still choke up with gratitude to Ramakrishna, for his own inner work, for his teaching, and for sending Swami Vivekananda to us, who started American yogis off with the most important part of yoga first – your own divine essence, and how to experience that reality within yourself.

When I left the temple, I stopped again at a smaller structure just outside the main entrance. It is a temple to the woman who gave the money to build the Kali temple. A princess in the royal family, she devoted a significant portion of her treasury to this huge and important temple. She laid the groundwork for my yoga practice today. What a beautiful gift she gave! And she is publicly acknowledged, more than 100 years later, with love and gratitude by the millions that come. I always stop at her small temple now, and thank her for her blessings to all of us.

Similarly, our Capital Campaign is structured to provide acknowledgement to our supporters at the different levels. Many yogis want to keep their donations secret. Other yogis want to give their time and energy but not their money. All of these are fine, but yoga demands that you look at your motives for your actions.

In an accompanying article, Rob describes many who contributed to designing our Capital Campaign program, by contributing their time and love as well as their expertise. These contributions have been critically important, but the financial contributions are too. Money matters. If it didn't, there wouldn't be so many yogis trying to ignore it!

At this point, we have received donations from over 150 yogis – all of them with their heart open and according to their means. Every donation touches my heart because I know where it comes from in the yogi who is giving. But the truth is that some donations add up faster than others. Some donations buy buildings; others buy soap.

Svaroopā Vidya Ashram will be publishing a list of donors. The Ashram Builders will be memorialized with their names on a plaque in our lobby. Why? Because their gift makes a big difference. They should be publicly honored, like the princess in Calcutta. It is a great gift that they give – to me, to you, to the Ashram

and to our future. It is a privilege to know of their gift and to be able to thank them for their love and support.

A few donors have asked to remain anonymous. We will reluctantly honor their request. It makes little sense to me, as a yogi, that someone would hide the fact that they are giving a large donation to something they care about. So many people flaunt the petty things that they spend money on, so why do you have to hide the good things that you do? Patanjali says in the Yoga Sutras that a yogi must celebrate the virtuous impulse in another person, and in herself/himself.

There are three types of things that motivate people to donate money:

- Need – people give money to organizations that feed the hungry, house the homeless, train the unemployable, and support the many who need help to make it through their life. These are worthy causes and important work.
- Ideals – people support organizations that bring the highest ideals into the world, including music and the arts, universities, Ashrams, churches and temples, as well as other organizations that seek to uplift the world and individuals.
- Personal relationship – people give because of the person involved. They give money to person who is dear to them, or they sponsor a specific child from the portfolio published by the orphanage. They subscribe to their community theater because they like the director, or they give to a political campaign because they believe the candidate is worth supporting.

It is rare that a donation drive covers all three bases at the same time! Perhaps this is why we are getting such an enthusiastic response to the Capital Campaign. At least, I hope that people see our need, share our ideals, and feel that my work as a teacher is worth supporting.

Regardless of the size of your gift, you will be thanked privately, with a gratitude letter emailed to you within 2-3 days. Regardless of the size of your gift, we will thank you publicly as well. I'd like to trumpet all of your names to the skies! You are worthy of great honor. I celebrate your virtue, applaud your generosity, and shed a few tears at the deep meaning in every one of your sweet gifts. Thank you.

To reach our teachers or to learn more about Svaroop® Yoga & Meditation, contact
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