

[No-Nonsense Calcutta Swami Rallies Youth To Serve India's Poor](#)

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## No-Nonsense Calcutta Swami Rallies Youth To Serve India's Poor

Yoga Master Empowers Young Swami in a Mission of Service

In 1978, the famed 18th-century Himalayan Mahayogi Baba Lokenath Brahmachari [See side bar, page 25] appeared to Swami Shuddhananda Brahmachari in a mystic vision. "I received Baba's dictate to spread his gospel." Born in Calcutta in 1949, he renounced the world at the age of 27. After two years of austerities in an ashram and after receiving Baba's darshan, in 1983 he established the Lokenath Divine Life Mission and the Baba Lokenath Dham in Bageshwar in the Himalayan foothills of the Almora district, "to spread the Universal religion of Divine Love and Service." He entered silence in 1983 to write the life story of Baba Lokenath, which he finished in 1984. In 1987 the mission began work in a Calcutta slum. In 1990 he came to America and gave his first lecture on the message of his master. We met up with swami on the floor of the 1993 World Vision 2000 Conference, in Washington, D.C. surrounded by dozens of questioning youth and wove our interview in with their probings.

Student: Will untruth always exist? One day will the night never come? Will it always be dawn? Is that the purpose of Hinduism?

Swami: Untruth will always exist just as night exists. It is a cycle.

Student: It seems we're just lost.

Swami: We are not lost, only you are lost. You keep on questioning. There is no end to it. Start practicing the principles which are laid down by those who have practiced it, the gurus of our land who really lived it, preached it by their own experiments, experience and their revelations. Just live that life for one or two years, with that restraint of your mind. Have the love relationship with the Divine

of any form or the formless for that matter-you'll invariably find your attitude to life is changing. You will get answers to many questions troubling you now.

Student: So one of my responsibilities is to try and bring the dawn?

Swami: Exactly, without nurturing any negative ideas, without not looking into anything negative, keep on trying with all the heart and the soul in a positive direction so the consciousness of the people of the world will just go up. It's not an impossibility. I'm talking about a possibility. And mind you from the year 2000 and ahead, we Hindus all over the world will be the torchbearers of this truth that we believe in-this spiritual oneness and we have to prepare ourselves for it.

Hinduism Today: What is your sampradaya?

Swami: I belong to Giri sampradaya, because my Gurudev belonged to Giri sampradaya.

HT: What is your personal deity?

Swami: Kali, Shakti.

HT: You have a lot of interaction with the western Hindu youth here. What is their biggest problem?

Swami: The biggest problem is that when youth go to our Hindu temples, they see lots of forms of God. They are now educated in Christian schools, where they see one God, where they're taught from one book of God. Against that, they go to the Hindu temples and see 101 rituals. They are lost in the jungle of this ritual. The second thing which really confuses them is that we Indians belong to different regions of India, like Gujaratis and Bengalis and Biharis and South Indians. Youth

find these people socializing in their own limited spheres. Each Hindu temple thus becomes full of small coteries and groups. Invariably that leads into a sort of inter-regional conflict. These second generation Hindus are growing up with lots more vision of openness, lots more freedom without any such discrimination, and they really feel that conflict deep in their heart.

Whether it is North America or in India, too, I know what happens—we go to the temples to socialize, but their friends go to the churches. They see how silently, how quietly Christians just worship and come back home. So I have a message from the core of my heart to the parents all over the world: to be very serious about this particular confusion that is brooding in the hearts of their children. It is up to the parents to glorify the state of guru. The father and mother are the first gurus. The extent to which father and mother can live the life of spirituality in their own home is the starting point to drive out much of the confusions of the second generation.

Puneet Kapur, 25: When you go to the villages do you also tell them about family planning or the importance of having smaller families for lower population growths?

Swami: We pick women, mostly married and settled down with 7th, 8th grade education. We give them a special training called Health Worker's Training in the city and send them back to the villages. This grassroots work by the same women of the village is bringing changes in village after village.

HT: Are you working in both the Muslim and Hindu areas?

Swami: We work in the Dona district which includes twenty villages of which seven are dominated by Muslim population. The whole Dona project population distribution is 60% Muslim and 40% Hindus. We are so well loved by every Muslim living there. When we work in their areas, we never take our Gods to their schools, We only invite their own teachers from their communities and their own teachers from their own spiritual groups and see to it that they educate their children their way. We never interfere with their religion as such.

Viraj Patel, 13: A lot of saints come to Columbia. They all say that you should do this person's mala, pray to this God. Who do you choose?

Swami: When you choose your guru, from whom you are going to take the mala and your mantra, it is your lifetime choice. You just can't change the mala and change the guru as you wish. Work with as many teachers as you want. But before taking the guru, you definitely have to think very deeply. That's not only for you, that's for all of us, so that once we take him then we don't falter, criticize and condemn. Once we take him, we take him. The choice is yours, and it's a one time choice.

HT: Swami, can you summarize your village work?

Swami: We are working on integrated Save Village Projects. We mean holistic. Our programs not only embrace the children but the adult women and men. Until they are educated, they will never value education for their children.

The next thing is that we work with two health programs. One is curing diseases through our free medical units. Second is creating awareness about health, family planning and all sorts of things to raise the consciousness level higher in the matter of their regular day to day health care. So one is curative, and the other is preventative.

Anita Goel, 32, W. Virginia, USA: I teach in a health club. Yoga came from India. Americans love that, but Hindus they are forgetting. How do I teach so our people do not forget about yoga and meditation?

Swami: Just fill yourself with love. Everbody around you will start changing. When you start the yoga classes just give love. All yoga is nothing but a relationship of love between us and God.

There is one student by the name Malay Kundu. He is doing his electronics

engineer's degree at MIT. Last year he made his first visit to India. He went during the summer time. It was heavily raining, but he worked in the slums in knee deep water. He went back with lots of photographs to MIT and gave a photo exhibition. He won a prize, a \$6,000 fellowship. His exhibition was highly appreciated because he never painted a negative picture of India. He presented the truth that the slum dwellers may be poor, the villagers may be poor, but they're happier than many, many people in this world. Mind you, this was just after the fall of the Babri Masjid. I told Malay, "This is the time when you can really test what Lokenath Divine Life Mission has done."

HT: Was there trouble in those villages after Babri Masjid went down.

Swami: No, because before the Babri Masjid fell they had already been working with us for 1 or 2 years. They had already known by then that this organization has nothing to do with religion but this organization has everything to do with the love of human beings.

HT: Have you done any renovation or construction of temples?

Swami: At this moment we are concentrating on taking care of the people so that they can be on their own. This is the need of the hour. There is no education, no proper means to earn money. The deprivation at the physical level is so deep. I would love them to get strength in their bodies first. There are villages that have started temples on their own. I have never told any one of them to have temples. They have come and told me, "Babaji, we want to have a temple. Our village is transformed. It has become such a holy place. So we want to have temples." But mind you, we never went there to teach or preach religion. We went there only with our heart open to give love and give them the understanding that they have the same self-respect and self-dignity as anybody else has in this world. And once they have that, spirituality will blossom out of their hearts.

HT: How does one achieve liberation from rebirth?

Swami: I personally feel that the only thing that one has to cultivate is love.

Nothing is superior to loving every object that is manifested, everything that is around us, and loving our own inner spirit in harmony with the rest of the cosmic manifestation. We must really penetrate through the skin and go deeper and really feel that the heart throbs of every heart are nothing but the vibration of the One without a second. He's in me. He's in others.

HT: So far we don't see many western-born Indian youth taking to sannyas. Do you see any sann-yasins coming out of this group? How can that happen?

Swami: Work in the villages of India would gradually give them the insight that the truth is not what the material world offers. Gradually, as they are more exposed to natural, spontaneous and eternal truths, I'm sure they'll be attracted towards the whole concept of renunciation. They will be able to identify their own spirit with every other spirit around them and they will be radiating that love from within.

HT: Is there any other thing you would like to add?

Swami: People belonging to all religions have to practice their religion and not just talk about it because by just talking we are missing the very objective. If all the religious groups practice true spirituality with all earnestness and sincerity, we will not fight with each other.

Mahayogi Baba Lokenath Brahmachari: 160 year old, 18th century siddha.

Mahayogi Baba Lokenatha appeared in a vision to Swami Shuddhananda in 1978, over 100 years after he died, commanding him to write his life story. Using several authentic 19th century Bengali accounts of Baba's life and aided by Baba's inner dictation, Swami completed a modern English account of Baba's life story, here summarized.

"The greatest yogi I ever met, His spiritual stature is beyond human comprehension." was one epitaph given to Baba Lokenatha born in 1730 to a brahmin family in the village of Chakla, a few miles from Calcutta. His father wanted one child to become a renunciate to liberate the family. At age 11 Lokenath left home with Master Bhagawan Ganguly. Taking up residence at Kalighat Temple and then in the forests to live with his master, he practised the ashtanga yoga of Patanjali along with the most difficult Hatha Yoga for about 25 years in a life of total surrender and service to his Guru. Then Baba Lokenath, completely naked, went to the Himalayas and remained absorbed in deep meditation and samadhi for 50 years. He said: "Snow would cover my body and melt of its own accord, when, for days, I was lost in Self-consciousness beyond the plane of the body." At the age of 90 he experienced the ultimate, non-dual Self-Realization. Then he traveled extensively on foot, throughout Afghanistan, Persia, Arabia and Israel, making three pilgrimages to Mecca. He came to the small town Baradi near the mouth of the Ganges at the age of 136. A wealthy family built a small hermitage which became his ashram. There, after 125 years of sadhana and tapas as a naked sadhu, he put on a sacred thread, donned the sannyasin's saffron robes and finished out his life showering divine wisdom and miracles on all who came. Over seven feet tall with little flesh, he had "divinized" his body, never slept and never closed his eyes or even blinked. If cut, some thick fluid other than blood was seen to come from the wound. He had the most awesome spiritual powers that expressed themselves in divine compassion to help and heal. His mere willing seemed to manifest across time and space. Great saints and swamis bowed to him. He said, before death: "I am eternal, I am deathless. After this body falls, do not think that everything will come to an end. I will live in the hearts of all living beings in my subtle astral form. Whoever will seek my refuge, will always receive my grace." Seated in his usual gomukh asana, fully conscious in samadhi with his eyes open, at an hour he had previously chosen, he left his physical body at the age of 160 under bright sun in the bright fortnight on the 19th day of the month of Jyeshtha, when the sun was in its northern passage, 1890.

## Lokenath Divine Life Mission Projects

Ulubaria Area, 13 villages: Former occupation-distillation of illicit liquor. LDLM has replaced this trade with saree sewing by women, rice raising by men, and making of paper bags,

Bafra Village Education Center:

Provides education for 121 children of all castes and creeds.

Radhapur Adult Education Center for Women

Free Medical Centers: As of January, 1993, 99,546 patients treated free of charge in West Bengal, the slums of Calcutta, Madras, Guwahati and Agartala.

Free Education Centers: 1240 children, adult men and women.

The above are only a few LDLM projects For details contact:

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