

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION INSTITUTE OF CULTURE

SRIMAT SWAMI GAHANANANDAJI MAHARAJ

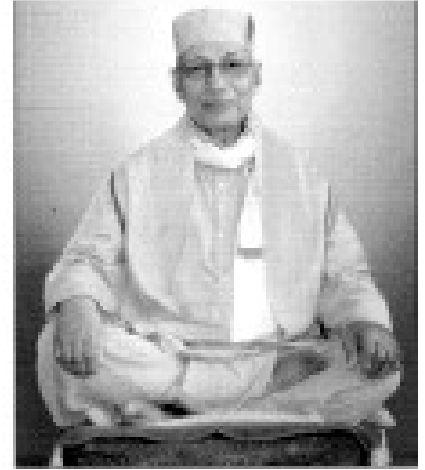
His Holiness Srmat Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj, the 14th President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission attained Mahasamadhi on Sunday, the 4th of November 2007, at 5.35 pm in the Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratisthan. He was 92.

Since May-June this year, Revered Maharaj began to give hints of his imminent Mahasamadhi saying, 'My work is over. Now I have to go. You can verify what I have said.' Everyone would have been so happy if his prophesy proved wrong, but to the deep anguish of all, it was otherwise.

On 24 July Maharaj inaugurated the new building in the campus of Seva Pratisthan. Thereafter he was admitted there for a thorough check-up. From then on his health continued to deteriorate under the impact of Parkinson's disease and other age-related ailments. Despite the best efforts of a team of reputed doctors and dedicated nursing, the end came at 5.35pm on 4th of November.

A true humanitarian, an untiring worshipper of God in human beings, Swami Gahanananda forever merged into the lotus feet of Sri Ramakrishna.

His pre-monastic name was Nareshranjan Roychoudhury. Born in Sylhet in 1916, Nareshranjan evinced great quality of leadership and a zeal to serve the distressed since his boyhood. Two of his cousins, Swami Prabhananda and Brahmachari Pramod initiated him into the ideal of Sri Ramakrishna. Later, inspired by Swami Vamadevananda he joined the Ramakrishna Math in Bhuvaneshwar where he was received by Swami Nirvananandaji, President of that Math, and later initiated by Swami Virajanandaji. In August 1942, he was sent to Advaita Ashrama and, on 25 February 1944, was given Brahmacharya by his Guru.



On 12th of March, 1948, he was given sannyasa by Swami Virajanandaji and given the name 'Swami Gahanananda'. He joined the Shillong Ashrama in 1953 and served the hill people of Shillong and Meghalaya for four and a half years.

In 1958 Swami Gahananandaji joined what is known today as Seva Pratisthan. Holding fast to the ideals placed by Swami Dayanandaji and placing himself under his guidance, he shaped himself between 1958 and 1963. Till 1985 he was intimately involved in the activities of this institution. It was owing to his strenuous efforts that 'Shishu Mangal Pratisthan' developed into a full-fledged general hospital.

In 1965 Maharaj was elected a Trustee of the Math and Member of the Governing Body of the Mission. He was appointed an Assistant Secretary of the two institutions in 1979. In 1989 he became the General Secretary of the Math and Mission. He became one of the Vice-Presidents in 1992. During this period he travelled extensively in India and abroad initiating innumerable people. After the passing away of Revered Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, Revered Gahananandaji was elected President of the Order on 25 May 2005.

A tireless worker with great forbearance and a sense of humour, he was always cool-headed, unperturbed, patient and cheerful. Through his love and sympathy for all he showed how Sri Ramakrishna's ideal of 'serving man as God' can be practised in one's life. An adept in japa, he lived a very disciplined life.

Once he said to a monk: 'Work is the best form of spiritual practice, and service to man is the best form of worship—these are the two principles I have followed all through my life.'

Let this ideal life of love and service inspire us all.