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Expressions of Vedantic Spirituality in the 21st Century

HOLY COMPANY - THE SACRAMENTO SAMITI

“Always sing devotional songs. To love God and live in the company of devotees: that is all. What more is there?” Sri Ramakrishna (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna)

The mind is everything. It changes its nature according to the things amongst which it lives and acts. Placed in the midst of devotees, one’s mind shall meditate upon God and talk on God. The Condensed Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna (according to M.)

*Editor’s Note: The following account is a good example of the importance of holy company. We begin with a brief overview (formation and activities) of the **Sri Sarada Mahila Samiti** of Northern California. Individuals will then share how membership in the group has spiritually benefitted them over the years.*

During her 1997 visit to Sacramento, Revered Pravrajika Amalaprana, currently General Secretary of Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, described the hundreds of *mahila samitis* throughout India. *Mahila samiti* literally means: women gathering together for personal spiritual benefit and to undertake service projects for the well-being of all. Within a few years, a Samiti group was formed in Sacramento dedicated to the study of the universal teachings of Sri Sarada Devi and Sri Ramakrishna.

Since the Samiti’s inception, numerous women and men have contributed their ideas and support in a variety of ways. In all, forty-seven women have joined as members, some devoted to the Vedanta Society of Sacramento and some from other centers and states.

Activities over the years include: meeting for meditation and spiritual discussion; going to India in small groups on spiritual pilgrimage; holding retreats with the pravrajikas of Sri Sarada Math and those from Vedanta centers in the U.S.; raising funds for the education of deserving girls and young women in India; and the distribution and study of publications of Sri Sarada Math. For events and projects of Samiti, visit www.maasamiti.org.

IN THE VOICES OF ITS MEMBERS

The most compelling thing about our Samiti is that it is heart and soul driven. I feel our collective spirit draws Holy Mother close to us; we feel guided by Her and blessed by Her in all we do. Ranu Pandey

I enjoy the Samiti for the fellowship, philosophy, and the kindness of Spirit. I am so grateful for the opportunity to offer music during the service. When I sing, I feel the presence of the Divine. Rajshree Gaitonde

The women of the Samiti drew me to Sacramento. To worship the Divine Holy Essence in the feminine form, to meditate in the company of committed, spiritual women, and to feel their influence is something never previously available to me. Victoria Raines
The Samiti project, The American Pioneer Women of Vedanta, has been especially dear to me. Since 2002, we have interviewed and videotaped many of our elder Vedanta sisters. All were disciples of early swamis in America and several have since left their bodies. Their joyful testimonies about dedicated spiritual practice continue to be an inspiration to me. Mary (Archana) Tamraz

Without the unfailing help and grace of Shakti, the universal Mother, spiritual progress in one's life is not possible. By collectively and harmoniously coming together once a month to meditate, read, share, chant, and sing bhajans, we empower one another towards the development of spiritual aspirations, a vital goal of our Samiti. Bidya Pradhan

The Samiti's vision of and devotion to the Motherhood of God first inspired me to join. I am benefitted by the deep conviction of the devotees that the power and compassion of the Universal Divine Mother addresses the suffering of the world. Members are actively seeking to bring out this power and compassion, this Divine Love, in themselves and others. Barbara O'Brien

Our Samiti has quietly, yet deeply, impacted my spiritual life. Not only have the monthly group meditations deepened my own spiritual practice, the periodic visits of the Pravrajikas, through inspiration and holy company, have opened doors previously closed to me. The greatest benefit of our Samiti to me, however, has been the reading of Holy Mother's life and teachings each month that I have then applied to my daily life. Gwyn (Gunamayi) Fellows

Being part of the Samiti group, I am able to connect deeply with other women who are

committed to walking the spiritual path. We can be ourselves with each other; we are there for the betterment of each other. We begin to see our lives from the point of service. For me, a memorable part of the group's activity is the commitment to meet each month, to set aside time to gather in spirit and service. Tanene Kurtenbach
