

## Swami Nirmalananda Saraswati

I still answer to Swami Nirmalananda (Rama) when someone calls to me. It's like a knee-jerk reflex, as I have been known by that name for decades. Yet it doesn't name me. In fact, it ceased to be my name over ten years ago - I have felt nameless for a long time. Now I am glad to have a name that actually names the nameless!

However, you'll probably find it hard to pronounce.

Nir (near) - even though it sounds like the English word "near," it means "without" or to be "free from."

ma (muh) - say it like you are going to say "mud," but leave off the d. Technically, it is a short "a" in Sanskrit, but it almost sounds like the u in mud.

la - this is like you are singing the scales: do re mi fa so la. in Sanskrit, this is a long a, which is held longer than the short a and has a slightly different sound.

Together, it means nir (without) mala (contraction) - beyond the three malas. Those of you who have taken the weekend workshop, "Beyond Your Limitations," already know what the three malas are. I will be teaching more about them in the next few months.

Let's go on with how to pronounce my new name. When you end on the "la," you already have the beginning of the next part, "aananda." So you can leave off the first a, and just say:

nan - this is Sanskrit with another short a, like you are saying "nun" (like a Catholic nun).

da - another short a, almost like "duh," only shorter.

All together, it is like this:

Nirmalananda: Near-mula-nunduh

I know that is a mouthful. So I respond to nicknames:

Nirmalaji - the "ji" (gee) on the end of a name is a way of indicating both love and respect

Nirmala Swami

Swamiji - but there are lots of us called "Swamiji" in America, so you'll need to be able to distinguish me among them.

Swami - short and easy. It's a title, like if you are saying, "Teacher" or "Doctor."

Of course, I will respond if you mispronounce it! I might even laugh and help you with it. We can laugh together.

I look forward to meeting and serving all of you as I have before, or even more fully. I certainly feel my love for you more fully than ever before - it's a great privilege to be part of your life. Thank you for that.

## Vidyadevi Stillman

Our beloved Bombay has a new name. She is no longer named after a small town in New York! Her new name is Vidyadevi, which means the goddess of knowing. Both *Lakshmi*, the goddess of wealth, and *Saraswati*, the goddess of knowledge, are honored by the name Vidya, so her name refers to both of them.

Vidya – this is easy to say, with a short "i" like in "sip" and a short "a" like in "yahoo". But do see if you can say it without adding a "j" – it's not "vid-jya;" it's "vid-ya." It means knowing; not learning and not thinking or theory, but the knowing that arises from within.

Devi – this is another easy word, like you are saying “Dave” with a “y” on the end – “Davey”. It means goddess.

Our own Vidyadevi is truly a goddess of knowing, but you already knew that!

So now you have two new names to learn...