



# Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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## Newsletter April 2015

### WORDS TO INSPIRE

**“Have faith in the name of God. Then you won't need even to go to holy places.” -Sri Ramakrishna**

### The Great Master and A Disciple

One day the Master saw a cockroach in a chest that he used for his clothes. He asked Jogin to take it outside and kill it. But Jogin took it outside the room and let it go. As soon as he returned, the Master asked, "Have you killed it?" "No, sir, I let it go," replied Jogin. Thereupon the master rebuked him, saying: "I told you to kill the cockroach, but you let it go. You should always do as I ask you to do. Otherwise, later in more serious matters also you will follow your own judgement and come to grief."

On another occasion Jogin was coming from Calcutta to Dakshineswar by boat. One of the passengers, knowing Jogin's destination, began to vilify Ramakrishna: "He is a mere pretender - practising deceit on the public. He eats good food, sleeps on a cozy bed, and turns the heads of schoolboys." Jogin was terribly hurt to hear the man's comment about the Master. At first he wanted to rebuke the man, but his gentle nature prevailed and he thought: "Well, people do not know Sri Ramakrishna, so they have odd ideas about him and criticize him. What can I do?" He kept silent. Upon arriving at Dakshineswar, Jogin told the Master about the incident. He thought that the Master would simply laugh - as he was indifferent to praise or blame - and the matter would end there. But the Master took it quite seriously and said to Jogin: "That man abused me for nothing and you kept silent! Do you know what the scriptures say? You must cut off the head of him who speaks ill of your guru or at least leave his presence at once. And you did not even protest against these false accusations?" It is amusing and instructive to contrast Sri Ramakrishna's rebuke to Niranjan who, listening to criticism of the Master, was about to sink a boat. The Master trained each disciple according to his temperament.

Jogin learned from the Master to defend the truth. It so happened that a woman of ill fame would come to take her bath in the Ganges at the Dakshineswar temple ghat. On her way back, she would bow down to the Master from a distance and sometimes would talk a little. Some villagers of

Dakshineswar noticed it and began to remark about it. Gossip spreads faster than the gospel. Listening to the village gossip, Jogin firmly protested: "The Master's character is pure and stainless. If you have doubts, why don't you investigate?" So a villager secretly went to the woman and asked if the gossip was true. She was shocked and said to the man: "Look, I may make my living in a shameful way, but I am not so mean as to tarnish the character of a god-man. You have no right to spread gossip or vilify the character of my beloved Master." The villager returned to his friends and reported what he had heard from the woman. When Jogin told the Master what had happened, Sri Ramakrishna said: "Some foolish people say so many things. Why do you listen to them?" This time the Master taught Jogin to ignore the endless gossip of worldly people, for otherwise it would drag his mind from God to the worldly plane.

As Jogin was always available, he had to run various kinds of errands for the Master. One day the Master needed some candles for his room, so he asked Jogin to get some from Girish Chandra Ghosh in Calcutta. When Jogin arrived there, he found that Girish was drunk. He told Girish that Sri Ramakrishna had sent him to get a few candles. Immediately Girish said: "Why a few? Take a box of candles." Girish then began to use abusive words against Sri Ramakrishna, yet from time to time he bowed down to him while facing Dakshineswar. Jogin was scared. He had never come across a drunken devotee. He took the candles, however, and after reaching Dakshineswar, reported everything in detail to the Master. Ramakrishna did not show any indignation towards Girish, rather he said to Jogin: "You saw his bad side, how he scolded me. Did you not also see his good side- how much love and devotion he had for me and how he bowed down to me? Girish is in a special class of devotee - a very high class - but his path is different from yours."

-From '*God Lived With Them*' by Swami Chetanananda,

pp.228-230

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## Journey of Life: Are There Any Rules? (Part 2)

(Based on a lecture by Prof. Narendra Bakhshi at Vedanta Society of Toronto on January 11, 2015)

It is important that we understand clearly what is meant by vidya and dhi:

### **Vidya**

Usually, vidya means education and knowledge. For example one goes to school/college/university etc. to get an education. However, it seems we do not even understand the real purpose of education. Currently three types of educational purposes are being discussed :

1. Commercial Purpose: Such as starting a career. (For example, plumbing, carpentry, electrical, etc.)
2. Cognitive Purpose: Acquiring information and learning how to think. Typical university/college education.
3. William Deresiewicz (Professor at Yale University) points out another purpose in his recent book, "Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life." Here the purpose is to build an integrated self.

It is interesting to know that the Bhagavad-gita has given the answer regarding this problem thousands of years ago as Bhagavan Krishna tells Arjuna (XIII/2):

*ksetra ksetrajnyoh jnanam yat tat jnanam matam mama*

The knowledge of ksetra (the field, worldly knowledge, secular knowledge) and ksetrajna (knower of the field, spiritual knowledge, knowledge of the Atman, Self-knowledge) is considered by Me to be the Knowledge.

Thus, together (spiritual knowledge and secular knowledge) they constitute the totality of all knowledge. Therefore 'vidya' truly means both secular and spiritual knowledge.

One alone won't do.

The end of education is character and right conduct.

### **Dhi (Buddhi, Intellect)**

A close examination of the practice of dharmic values indicates that the role played by the seventh value — Dhi — is extremely important. Dhi (or buddhi, intellect) plays a key role in all our activities and actions. Therefore, we have to clearly understand what exactly is meant by Dhi/Buddhi.

Buddhi is not mind (manas) or smartness (medha shakti). It is the faculty of reason, judgment, and discrimination. It represents the integration of the intellect, emotion, and will. It controls, or ought to control, all the psychic and sensory processes in a human being. It is manufactured out of the psycho-physical energy system within everybody. We only purify that energy, refine it; then it becomes buddhi.

Such a refined buddhi is called 'pure buddhi' or 'sattvik buddhi.' Such a buddhi is free of blemishes (lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride, selfishness, envy, etc.). Sri Ramakrishna used to say that there is no difference between pure buddhi and Atman.

But how does one develop 'pure buddhi'? It requires practical effort along three directions:

1. Sadhana ( regular spiritual practice)
2. Leading a dharmic life
3. Performing all our actions according to the philosophy of karma yoga. Bhagavad-gita (III/30) best describes the process:

*mayi sarvani karmani sannyasyadhyatmacetasa.*

*nirasih nirmamo bhutva yudhasva vigatajvarah*

Renouncing all actions to Me, with mind centered on the Self or Atman (that is, adhyatmacetasa), getting rid of hope (anxiety, craving) and selfishness, fight on (the battle of life), free from mental fever (without any stress or inner tension).

The above three types of efforts are not mutually exclusive. Each of them affects the performance of the other two.

Over a period of time, all this effort leads to transforming (refining) the ordinary buddhi to pure buddhi.

We should be aware that the buddhi (intellect) on which the light of the Atman shines (*adyatmacetasa, III/30*) is far different from the buddhi which is in thrall to the sense organs. Thus, the purification of buddhi is essential, not only for our everyday life, but ultimately it leads us in achieving the goal of life — Self-realization, merging in the Divine or moksha.

The right spiritual effort leads to 'pure buddhi' (or chitta shuddhi) and chitta shuddhi then leads to jnana siddhi (God-realization).

Furthermore, pure buddhi makes us an independent thinker. One does not depend on books, dogmas, personalities etc., as one's intellect has developed the power and ability to discriminate between right and wrong and then do the right thing. This is of tremendous benefit in our daily life as well, as it improves our chances to live a harmonious and meaningful life (because the conduct is right).

In a nutshell, lead the life of a 'Raja-Rishi.' Life of intense activity outside but with a calm, even, detached mind inside.

### **Divine Grace**

When one lives a life according to the three directions described earlier, it becomes a life lived according to the yoga of buddhi. Such sincere spiritual effort makes one fit to receive the Grace of the Divine.

1. Krishna tells Arjuna (Gita VI/40):

*partha naiveha namutra vinasah tasya vidyate nahi kalyanakrt kascit durgatim taata gacchati*

Verily, O son of Partha (Arjuna), there is no destruction (vinasha) for such a one, neither here nor hereafter, for the doer of good, O my son, never comes to grief (durgatim taata gacchati).

2. A yogi (practitioner of spiritual disciplines for the purification of buddhi) always lives and acts in the

presence of the Divine. Krishna tells Arjuna again (Gita IX/22):

*Annanyas-cintayanto mam ye janah paryupasate  
tesam nityabhiyuktanaam yogaksemam vahamy aham*

To those persons who worship Me through everything they do, to them who are thus ever zealously established in yoga, I provide what they lack and preserve what they already have.

3. And again, (Gita IX/31):

*kaunteya pratijanihi na me bhaktah pranasyati*

O son of Kunti (Arjuna) know for certain that My devotee never perishes.

4. And again (Gita V/29):

*bhoktaram yajnatapasam sarva loka mahesvaram  
suhrdam sarvabhutanam jnatva mam santimrcchati*

Knowing Me as the enjoyer of sacrifices (yajna) and austerities (spiritual practices, tapas), the Great Lord of all the worlds and friend (always a well-wisher expecting nothing in return, suhrd), one attains Peace.

The Lord is Love and not a wrathful God. He is the friend and well-wisher of all beings. This verse, if understood well, is a prescription for achieving a calm and even mind.

#### ***Some Far-Reaching Implications of Dharmic Life***

Remember, dharmic life results in right conduct, a disciplined lifestyle, good character and an integrated personality. These qualities have tremendous implications for the individual and the society. For example:

1. Individual: A healthy, balanced and quality life. Less tension and less conflicts.
2. Family: Harmony and peace at home.
3. Health System: Obviously less burden on the health system, and possibility of tremendous savings.
4. Law Enforcement: Again, less burden on the system. Right conduct results in law-abiding persons.
5. Country/Nation: A caring and civilized group of people (result of dharmic life) has the potential to make a nation peaceful, prosperous and a just nation. This, ultimately, increase the chances for Peace in the World.

#### **Additional Comments**

In a recent book "The Great Degeneration" the author (Niall Ferguson) surmises that for a society/country to flourish, the following four pillars are required:

1. Representative Government (Democracy)
2. Free Markets (Capitalism)
3. Rule of Law
4. Civil Society

He maintains that in a society/country where these four factors are operating properly, that society will thrive and prosper.

In my opinion, the key factor is item number 4, Civil Society.

But, how do you define a civilized society? Is it a society with various comforts and amenities that we are used to (such as modern housing, transportation, shopping centers, medical facilities et.) or something else also is needed?

For a society to be called a civilized society, in addition to all that, it must also be a society which practices moral and ethical values (that is, lives a dharmic life). Practice of dharma in daily life has the power to dramatically transform our nature/personality for the better. We should remember that the ultimate aim of dharmic life is the realization (anubhava-experience) of our divine Nature.

The more people practice these values, the better the harmony and order will there be in that society. The first three pillars (representative government, free market, and rule of law) will function with much more ease and fairness if the society is automatically law-abiding (which will happen naturally if people live a dharmic life.)

Thus one can see the great importance and the far-reaching implications of more and more people living a dharmic life. Not only is it important for the individual, but it is also important for the society, the country, and ultimately for the peace in the world.

So, what is the Message?

1. Lead a dharmic life (satyam vada – speak the truth; and dharmam chara — practice dharma) for a meaningful and fulfilled life. Such a life will result in the 'beauty of character' in the individual, and harmony and order all around. These aforementioned ten dharmic values are universal and eternal.

2. Constant remembrance of the Divine (adhyatmachetsa – Gita III/30 and XVIII/78) helps tremendously in leading such a life.

3. This (practice of dharma in daily life) is the science of human growth, development and fulfillment. It is the science of unfolding the infinite possibilities in every human being.

4. The life of dharma leads to prosperity and justice in the society and the nation.

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# RELIGION AND LIFE

## Swami Bhuteshanandaji's Answers to Questions

***Which form of Holy Mother should we meditate on?***

Whatever we feel drawn to, the word 'Mother' brings love and solace to our mind. The loving mother, the all-suffering mother, the all-forgiving mother is Holy Mother. We must meditate on her thus.

***During his terminal illness, Turiyanandaji said that he suffered because he did not do Sri Ramakrishna's work. But he did such a lot of tapasyá and sadhana all his life. Were they not Sri Ramakrishna's work? What did he mean by his statement?***

By 'Sri Ramakrishna's work' he meant Swamiji's work; that is to say, the work which Swami Vivekananda had initiated. Turiyanandaji did not do all that Swamiji wanted him to. He was contemplative by nature and did not have the urge to work. He went to the United States at Swamiji's command and stayed at the Shanti Ashrama there for some time. There too he led a life of intense austerities. Swami Vivekananda's ideal is: do *this* as well as *that*. You must not confine yourself to *japa* and meditation. At the same time, you must not restrict yourself only to work. As an ideal, both need to be harmonized.

***Are you impressed by any particular teaching of Mahapurush Maharaj (Swami Shivanandaji)?***

There are many teachings and we must understand them with reference to the context. I remember an incident. One day, while walking on the Math courtyard in an indrawn mood, he suddenly stood still. Just then a monk came and saluted him by touching his feet. Unfortunately, at that very moment Mahapurush Maharaj also started walking. So he tripped and fell, hurting his hand. He scolded the monk. I was with Mahapurush Maharaj then, along with his attendant. Later, when he returned to his room, he said: 'Ah! I scolded that monk. But how will he know what was my state then? My eyes were open, but I did not see anything.' Hearing his

words, I was stunned. Is there a state when the eyes are open but you don't see anything? I was greatly impressed by that statement.

***Is someone who has no faith in himself an atheist?***

Swami Vivekananda says that. Generally, not many have faith in themselves. How many do you find with faith in themselves? Technically, one who does not believe in the Vedas is an atheist and one who believes in the Vedas is a believer.

***How to have faith in oneself?***

We should follow this stream of thought: 'I can achieve everything; I can do it,' etc. We should not give up just because we have failed a few times.

***Because of numerous obstacles, the mind becomes restless. What shall I do?***

Everything belongs to Him. Your house, wealth, family, job, relatives and friends, everything belongs to Him alone. Think thus deeply. Your mind will then remain unperturbed under all circumstances.

***Will my mental power increase by performing japa?***

By performing *japa*, gradually your dependence on God will grow. That will bring courage and confidence.

***Does the guru himself fix our Ishta (chosen Ideal)? Is it he who gives us strength?***

In a way, yes. You see, the real guru is not outside you. He is always inside, giving you strength. To believe or not is up to you, but it is the inner guru who provides you with strength. While you meditate, do you think of your guru as sitting in a playground? No, you don't. You think he is within. Because the field is not ready, we don't understand it even when the guru gives us strength.

-From *Prabuddha Bharata*, March 2002

## **ANNUAL SUMMER RETREAT**

Annual Summer Retreat will be held on Saturday June 20 and Sunday June 21 from 9 am to 4pm. The theme of the Retreat is: 'Sri Ramakrishna as a human being'. This year SWAMI SHANTARUPANANDA, head of the Vedanta society of Portland, Oregon, USA will be the guest speaker.

Registration Fee for each day is \$40 and for both days it is \$75. Venue of the Retreat will be announced later.

### **Guest Speaker**

This month's guest speaker is Prof. Ram Murty of Queens University, Kingston, Canada. He will speak at the Society on Sunday April 5. The title of his speech is: 'Gandhi and the Gita'.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

SWAMI VIDYANATHANANDA (Mahan Maharaj) Professor at the Vivekananda University, Belur Math, India will deliver a Talk on 'Why Truth' on Sunday, May 17, 2015. Venue will be announced later.

## **REGULAR PROGRAMMES**

**SCRIPTURE CLASS:** Every Friday at 7:30 pm, following the regular evening prayer at 6:00 pm.

Devotional singing and meditation is held in the evenings from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

**VIGIL:** A vigil consisting of japa and meditation is observed from 6:00am to 6:00pm. For the date of this month's vigil, please see the 'Calendar of Events' on the next page. To participate, please call the Centre.

**DAILY BREAD FOOD BANK:** Many less fortunate families are dependent on the food bank for their daily nutrition. Please help us by contributing non-perishable food items that we may pass along to the Daily Bread Food Bank.

**RAM NAM:** For the date and time of the monthly Ramnam, please see the 'Calendar of Events' on the next page.

**SOUP KITCHEN:** The Soup is cooked at the Vedanta Society and offered serving meals at Syme Woolner Neighbourhood & Family Centre, 2468 Eglinton Ave W, Unit 3, Toronto, ON, M6M 5E2. Please contact the Centre, if you are interested in participating. ***Donations for the Soup Kitchen will be highly appreciated***

### **INTERVIEWS/INSTRUCTION:**

Swami Kripamayanaanda will be happy to give interviews to those interested in knowing more about Vedanta and meditation. Individual interviews are also given for spiritual instruction. Appointments for interviews should be made in advance with the Swami at 416-240-7262.

**BOOK STORE:** The Book Store is open after Sunday Services and special programmes, and arrangements can be made by phone for weekday and Saturday visits. We carry selected titles from the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature, as well as other Vedantic materials.

**DAILY MEDITATION:** Meditation is observed at the Centre every morning from 6:00 am to 7:00 am.

## **IMPORTANT NOTICE**

**Parking on the road beside the Vedanta Society which is a Fire Route and which belongs to the West Park Hospital, is strictly prohibited. West Park Hospital has informed that they are going to give tickets @ \$250.00 for illegal parking on the road as well as in their property other than the designated parking area.**

# Vedanta Society of Toronto

Minister and Teacher - Swami Kripamayanda, Ramakrishna Order of India

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS April 2015

Sunday	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Friday	Saturday
			<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture class: 'Vivekachudamani'	<u>4</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen
<u>5</u> <u>11am</u> Guest Lecture: 'Gandhi and the Gita' by Prof. Ram Murty	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen	<u>10</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture class: 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>11</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen
<u>12</u> <u>11am</u> Lecture: 'Rolling down of the ball'  <u>VVM 1:30 pm</u>  <b>Ram Naam</b>	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen	<u>17</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture class: 'Vivekachudamani'	<u>18</u> <u>6am-6pm</u> <b>VIGIL</b>  <u>7pm-8pm</u> <b>DEVOTEES'</b> <b>SINGING</b>
<u>19</u> <u>11am</u> Lecture: 'Bhaja Govindam: Worship God, Now!'  <u>VVM 1:30 pm</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>21</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture class: 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>25</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen ----- <u>VVM 1:30pm</u> (Rehearsal for Pradarshanam)
<u>26</u> <u>11am</u> <b>VEDANTA VIDYA MANDIR PRADARSHANAM</b>	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>		

**"To the Yogi everything is bliss; every human face that he sees brings cheerfulness to him." -Swami Vivekananda**