



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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Newsletter April 2008

Words to Inspire

“God is the inexplicable, inexpressible essence of love”,
to be known, but never defined.

-“Inspired Talks” Page 5

“The Meaning of Love”

-*Swami Vivekananda, Karma Yoga, pp.44-45*

‘The word ‘Love’ is very difficult to understand; love never comes until there is freedom. There is no true love possible in the slave.

If you buy a slave and tie him down in chains and make him work for you, he will work like a drudge, but there will be no love in him. So when we ourselves work for the things of the world as slaves, there can be no love in us, and our work is not true work. This is true of work done for relatives and friends, and is true of work done for our own selves.

Selfish work is slave’s work; and here is a test. Every act of love brings happiness; there is no act of love which does not bring peace and blessedness as its reaction. Real existence, real knowledge, and real love are eternally connected with one another, the three in one: where one of them is, the others also must be; they are the three aspects of the One without a second-- the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss.

When that existence becomes relative, we see it as the world; that knowledge becomes

in its turn modified into the knowledge of the things of the world; and that bliss forms the foundation of all true love known to the heart of man. Therefore true love can never react so as to cause pain either to the lover or to the beloved.

Suppose a man loves a woman; he wishes to have her all to himself and feels extremely jealous about her every movement; he wants her to sit near him, to stand near him and to eat and move at his bidding. He is a slave to her and wishes to have her as his slave. That is not love; it is a kind of morbid affection of the slave, insinuating itself as love. It cannot be love, because it is painful; if she does not do what he wants, it brings him pain.

With love there is no painful reaction; love only brings a reaction of bliss; if it does not, it is not love; it is mistaking something else for love. When you have succeeded in loving your husband, your wife, your children, the whole world, the universe in such a manner that there is no reaction of pain or jealousy, no selfish feeling, then you are in a fit state to be unattached.’

What is True Knowledge? - The Vedantic Approach

[Based on the talk delivered at the Vedanta Society of Toronto on February 10, 2008 by Dr. Narendra Bakhshi, Prof. Emeritus, University of Saskatchewan, Canada]

(Continued from the March 2008 Issue)

How is this true (or right) knowledge obtained?

There is great deal of difference in how the knowledge of the observer (Para vidya) and the knowledge of the observed phenomena (Apara vidya) are obtained.

1) The Apara Vidya (knowledge of the observed phenomena) is obtained by the sensual methods of observation, discussion, reasoning, experimentation, studying and understanding of various phenomena (such as various professions, trades etc.). Here the observer (the subject or I) and the knowledge of the object (the observed phenomena) are two different and separate things. The quality of the subject I (i.e. its character, morality, ethics and such values) does not enter into the picture at all.

2) However, for the knowledge of the observer (the I) or Para Vidya, the situation is quite different. All the comments above help but not much. Actually, reading of books etc (the usual approach in obtaining knowledge) helps somewhat, but not much. Actually, reading too many books creates confusion. Here, an entirely different approach is required.

The first thing needed is a moral and ethical life. Here, the nature/quality of 'I' is extremely important. Here, Vedanta comes to our help. It tells us that in order to understand 'Paravidya', we must start with the practice of 'yamas' and 'niyamas'.

a) The five yamas (restraints) are – Ahimsha (non-violence, both physical and mental), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (celibacy, sublimation of sexual energy), Aparigraha (life of simplicity and limitation of desires),

b) The five niyamas (observances) are – Shaucha (purity, of body and mind), Santosha (contentment), Tapah (austerity), Swadhyaya (study of scriptures, specially written by those realized souls), Ishwara pranidhana (surrender to God)

Some simple and helpful hints for the spiritual journey

1) Maintaining Health (Both Physical and Mental)

Gita tells us (VI/17):-

“For him who is Yukta (moderate, proper and regular) in eating and recreation a Yukta in his actions, sleep and wakefulness, yoga (this lifestyle) becomes destroyer of pain.”

We shall remember that eating here does not mean only eating through our mouth but eating (i.e. taking in, inputs) through our eyes and ears as well. All such inputs in our body must move us towards greater and greater purity of mind.

2) Company of the holy (Satsang)

Being in the company of spiritually advanced persons helps us tremendously in our march towards being a spiritual person. Saint Tulsidas (author of Ramayana) has said:

“Ek ghari adhi ke puni adhi
Tulsi Sangat sadhu ki harey koti apradh”

[Tulsi says that company of a sadhu (a holy person) for a ghari (24min), half-a-ghari (12 min) or even half of that (6 min), destroys a million sins (transgressions)].

3) Recitation of Gayatri Mantra and constant remembrance of the name of Lord (Smaran)

Recitation of Gayatri Mantra with proper pronunciation (and understanding) is highly beneficial. The mantra must be pronounced accurately. The vibrations thus generated have a very powerful effect for the purification of our mind. Not only does it make the intellect (Buddhi) pure, but it makes it sharp as well (highly beneficial for students). In addition, it also protects the person who chants it regularly.

The Gita-acharya Krishna tells us in the Gita (IX / 22):

“To these persons who worship “Me” alone, thinking of none other, to those ever self controlled, I secure for them which is not already possessed (yoga) by them, and preserve for them what they already have (Kshema).”

The first effect of Sadhana is the development of self confidence in the individual. Because of this, one feels a tremendous amount of self-satisfaction in whatever he does. Over a period of time, all this leads to self -sacrifice (our service

activities for example) and which ultimately leads to self-realization).

Actually based on what has been said so far, Bhoga (sense enjoyments) without Yoga (self -discipline) will lead one to Roga (ill-health, various diseases).

4) Self-less service (Seva)

Rendering service to the needy in the society also is an important activity which helps us spiritually. However, the service must be selfless. Selfless service is the path to self-realization. We should be grateful that we are allowed to serve ‘God’ in man. Swami Vivekananda has said that the message of Sri Ramakrishna is to consider “Shiva (God)” is every “Jiva (Individual) and thus to serve him/her with love.

Respectful service rendered to parents, elders and teachers also is of tremendous spiritual and material benefit. Their Ashirvad (blessings) help in mysterious ways.

Bhagawan Sri Krishna has summarized beautifully what has been said so far:

“Verily, there is no purifier in this world, like Jnana (Knowledge i.e. true Knowledge). He that is perfected in Yoga, realizes it in his own heart in due time” [IV/38]

Just imagine, if we pursue this type of a life style, what improvements can take place in the quality of our life, our health, our education, our relationships and everything around us!

(Concluded)

Vedanta Society of Toronto: 1968 - 2008

Fortieth Anniversary

Dear Friends,

As you know, the year 2008 marks the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Vedanta Society of Toronto. Aravind Menon, K.S. Senathirajah and B. Ramaswami founded the Society and it was finally inaugurated by Swami Ranganathananda on November 30, 1968. For many years the fledgling Society was guided by Swami Bhasyananda. With over 300 members and as an official Branch Centre of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, the Society, nurtured and nourished by the service, devotion and spiritual leadership of Swami Pramathananda from 1989 to 2003, has come a long way in these 40 years. It is fitting that this milestone be observed in a special way.

After some consultation, the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee are proposing several programmes and initiatives. In late April this year, there will be an inter-faith music programme. "Music of Faith" will bring together the choirs of several faith groups who will share with us their music. In the past we have had inter-faith seminars where we discussed the belief and perspectives of different faiths. But it is well known that music, more than words can bridge the gap between different cultures and different faiths. Thus "Music of Faith" may generate a deeper empathy between various faith groups.

In the month of August or Sept, we plan to have an annual seminar on the topic "Perspectives on Vedanta". We will focus on the issues and challenges that arise when one presents Vedanta in a multi-cultural, multi-faith environment. Sometime in the summer, we also have to have a program on the Society itself. This will include a retrospective as well as reflections on what the future might hold.

In addition to these programs, we are proposing a major project to expand and improve our facilities. This includes improvements to the kitchen and additional space for the Vedanta Vidya Mandir. We are also considering the purchase of a nearby house which could serve as a guest-house for visitors to our centre. While details of these are being discussed, we invite your input through comments and suggestions. You may send these by email to Utpal Banerjee <utpalb@rogers.com>. The expansion should serve our needs until at least 2018, when we will celebrate our 50th anniversary. We are looking forward to your active involvement and participation in all of the above.

*Yours in Sri Ramakrishna
Swami Kripamayanda*

SUMMARY OF PAST EVENTS

Maha Shivaratri was celebrated on **6th March 2008**. The programme consisted Bhajan discourse followed by prasad distribution. About 70 devotees attended the programme.

Sri Ramakrishna Birth Anniversary Puja was celebrated on **9th March 2008**. The programme consisted Bhajan, discourse, havan, flower offering followed by prasad distribution. About 350 devotees attended.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Buddha Jayanti will be celebrated on **Sunday, May 25, 2008** at **11:00am** with

worship, Bhajans, flower offering and prasad distribution.

REGULAR PROGRAMMES

SCRIPTURE CLASS: **Friday Scripture Classes** begin at **7:30 pm**, following the regular evening prayer at 6:00 pm. The class, held at the centre, is open to all interested persons.

VIGIL: On **Saturday, April 12**, a vigil consisting of japa and meditation will be observed, from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm. To participate, please call the centre at 416-240-7262.

RAM NAM: **Monday, April 14 at 6:30 pm.**

INTERVIEWS/INSTRUCTION:

Swami Kripamayananda 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.

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

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

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.

SOUP KITCHEN: The Soup is cooked at the Vedanta Society and now served four days (2nd and 3rd Thursday and 3rd and 4th Tuesday) a month at Roncesvalles Food Sharing, 263 Roncesvalles Avenue, Toronto M6R 2L9. This month, the Soup Kitchen dates are April 10, April 15, April 17 and April 22. Please contact the Centre if you are interested in participating. *Donations for the Soup Kitchen will be highly appreciated.*

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.

Vedanta Society of Toronto

Minister and Teacher - Swami Kripamayanda, Ramakrishna Order of India

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u> NO SCRIPTURE CLASS	<u>5</u>
<u>6</u> 11am-Lecture: ‘THE WILL OF RAMA’ by Prof. V. Kumar Murty VVM: 1-30 pm	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u> 9.30am Soup Kitchen	<u>11</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna	<u>12</u> Vigil: 6 am to 6 pm
13 11am-Lecture: ‘Spiritual Transformation’	<u>14</u> 6:30pm Ram- navami Puja and Ramnam	<u>15</u> 9.30am Soup Kitchen	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u> 9.30am Soup Kitchen	<u>18</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: Tattvabodha	<u>19</u>
<u>20</u> 11am-Lecture: ‘The Secret of Work’ VVM: 1-30 pm	<u>21</u>	<u>22</u> 9.30am Soup Kitchen	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna	<u>26</u>
<u>27</u> 11am- 40th Year Event Music of Faith	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>			

SPECIAL EVENTS IN APRIL

Monday, April 14, 2008 : Ramnavami Puja and Ramnam at 6:30 pm

**Sunday, April 27, 2008 : ‘Music of Faith’- Music, hymns and songs from Major
 Faith groups at 11 am**