



# Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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## Newsletter April 2010

### Words to Inspire

Swami Subodhananda says: 'He who is not a slave to his senses and mind, but on the contrary has made them his slaves, is a true Brahmacharin.'

-Prabuddha Bharata, Jan 2010, p92

### BRAHMACHARYA ASHRAMA

(From an article published in Prabuddha Bharata, Jan 2010)

In the Vedic age the lifespan of an individual was divided into four ashramas, stations of life: Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha, and Sannyasa. According to India's ancient tradition, every individual had to pass through the stage of brahmacharya before taking up any of the next stages of life.

The Brahmacharya Ashrama consisted in staying with the teacher, serving him or her, studying the Vedas, following a life of self-control, and also performing certain austerities. The students remained with the teacher for a fixed period of time after the completion of which they were free to choose their way of life- either returning home to live as a householder or continuing to stay with the teacher while practicing life-long celibacy along with other spiritual disciplines, service, and study. The former type was called Upakurvana brahmacharya and the later Naishthika brahmacharya.

The final purpose of the Brahmacharya Ashrama and its activities was spiritual enlightenment and it served, at the same time, as the foundation of the other three ashramas. The ancient rishis knew well that only if people succeed in this station of life can they later lead worthy lives in the other ashramas. Those following the ideal of brahmacharya in early youth are capable of becoming ideal householders or ideal sannyasins in future.

Initiation into Brahmacharya Ashrama involves the ritual of upanayana. This word means 'taking the student near the teacher' or 'the rite by which the student is taken to the acharya'. Upanayana is samskara, purification rite, during which the student is invested with a sacred thread and imparted Gayathri mantra, which is a prayer for the awakening of dhi, spiritual insight. Therefore, upanayana principally means Gayathri upadesa, instruction in the Gayathri mantra.

It is important to note that even for becoming a householder, a student had to pass through the Brahmacharya Ashrama and undergo training and studies under a guru. Only after acquiring appropriate knowledge were students entitled to marry and lead the life of householder.

The Grihastha Ashrama is of great value, as it is the householder who materially supports the entire community and the other three ashramas. Householders carry great social responsibility and a particular kind of brahmacharya is also mandatory for them. Grihastha Ashrama does not mean giving license to the senses: some desires can be satisfied, but this has to be done within the framework of dharma. Householders are expected to exercise great self-control, and the training for it is acquired in the Brahmacharya Ashrama. Only with this background can a person evolve and achieve fulfillment in life.

## **VISION OF BHAGVAD GITA FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT-Part II**

**(Narendra N. Bakhshi, Professor Emeritus, University of Saskatchewan)**

**(Based on a Talk delivered at the Vedanta Society of Toronto on January 24, 2010)**

Bhagvan Sri Krishna gives us the answer in the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gita (guna traya vibhaga yoga).

He tells us that our personality is composed of a mixture of the three gunas of Prakriti (nature)

The term guna in the Gita indicates the “attitude” with which the mind functions. It indicates the three different “climatic conditions “ that influence the psychological personality in us.

These three gunas are: sattva, rajas and tamas. Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa explains these three gunas through a parable. Sri Ramakrishna’s parable of the three thieves:

“A person was going thru a forest. Three thieves came and attacked him. After attacking and robbing him, the first thief said ,” Bind him and kill him. There is no use in keeping him alive.” They were about to kill him when the second thief said “Why should we kill him? We shall bind him nicely, leave him here and take his wealth and go away.” The third thief watched all this. After the two thieves had gone away, he came to this person and said” so sorry you are in this trouble” He freed him from the bondage and said “follow me. I shall take you to your home” And thus he took that person out of the forest and pointing with his finger said” that is your town and that is your home you go now.” At that time this man was thankful and he said to the thief “ you have done so much good to me, please come with me to my house, I want to honor you.” “ No, no” replied the third thief, “ I cannot go, I am also a thief, the police will be after me, I can do just this much for you.” The first thief was tamas, the second , rajas, and the third was sattva. All three are thieves but one of them is a nice thief. Very kind hearted and good. Thus, the answer to the question, why we are different is:

“The three gunas in different proportions influence the mental and the intellectual caliber of every individual and these influences provide the distinct flavour in each personality. All three are always present in every person but from individual to individual their proportion slightly differs: hence the distinct “ aroma” in the character and behavior of each individual”

Now, let us go back to the first question: How does one get there, that is, developing those divine qualities? What path should one follow to achieve such a highly desirable as well as a difficult goal?

The answer is very simple. The whole key is to increase the sattva guna in our personality and later, even go beyond the three gunas (that is, becoming gunateeta).

How does one increase sattva? The sattva is increase by living the life- every moment of our life, our day-day life by practicing the “yoga of buddhi”. Essentially, yoga of buddhi or buddhi yoga , is the development of the power of discrimination ( viveka buddhi) of the intellect. It develops an uncanny capability to know what is right and what is wrong and the power to pursue what is right. This “yoga buddhi” makes us independent of tons of self-help books and of various do’s and don’t’s.

How does one achieve this? Here, again Gita comes to our help and provides the path, the way, the method. Gita tells us in Chapter 10, verse 10 “tesam satatyuktanam bhajatam prtipurvakam dadami buddhiyogam tam yena mam upayanti te” “to them, ever devout( always remembering Me sincerely) worshipping Me with love, I give the buddhi yoga (yoga of discrimination) by which they come to Me.”

Once we start practicing buddhi yoga (remembering the Lord with love and practicing the yoga of discrimination ) over a period of time everything is achieved.

Bhagvan tells us in Chapter 4 verse 38

“na hi jnanena sadrsam pavitram iha vidyate tat svayami yogasamsiddhah kalena atmanivindati”

“verily there is no purifier in this world like jnana( wisdom developed by the practice of buddhi yoga in daily life). He that is perfected in this yoga, realizes it (attains wisdom) in his own heart, in due time”

Bhagvan reiterates the same message as to how we should conduct ourselves in daily life in the last chapter of the Gita Chapter 18 verse 57.

“cetasa sarvakarmani mayi samnyasya matprah buddhiyogam upasritya maccittah satatam bhava”  
“mentally resigning all deeds ( all actions) to Me, having Me as the highest goal, resorting to buddhi yoga (practicing the yoga of discrimination) , DO YOU EVER FIX YOUR MIND ON ME”

In a nutshell, this is the message of the Gita. It is a simple but extremely useful blueprint for the art and science of life. In my opinion, the message of the buddhi yoga is the greatest( and very powerful) contribution of the Lord for the upliftment and development for all humanity.

#### A Warning

Just as a loving mother warns the child that if he puts his hand in fire, the hand will burn. Similarly, Bhagvan warns us in Chapter 18 verse 58 “maccittah sarvadurgani matprasadat tarisyasi atha cet tvam ahamkaran na srosyasi vinanksyasi”

“fixing your mind on Me, you shall by My Grace, overcome all obstacles. But if from egoism you will not listen to Me, YOU SHALL PERISH.” Some implications of practicing buddhi yoga. As the sattva guna increases in the human personality ( by sustained practice of yoga of discrimination) tremendous changes take place.

At the individual level, the self confidence increases and the lifestyle becomes more and more peaceful, harmonious and fruitful. Health improves, one becomes gentle and kind and less and less egotistic. Buddha has said “ it is the attainment of wisdom that enables a person to attain liberation from suffering”

At the societal level, as the health of the individuals improves, the overall healthcare should become less expensive.. As the individual natures are gentle, kind and peaceful, this should result in the harmony and peacefulness in the society.. Obviously, costs of law enforcement decrease. All types of operations performed in the society get carried out efficiently as each individual operates efficiently because that is the characteristics of sattva nature.

Reference: *Holy Gita Ready Reference (2005) Page 319 : Chinmaya International Foundation, Adi Sankara Nilayam, Veliyanad, India.*

And if all these changes take place and that is a very very big if, the chances of world peace also increase tremendously. All this is a possibility, if each one of us starts practicing the yoga of discrimination ( buddhi yoga).

THUS, WHAT IS THE MESSAGE?

What have I said regarding the Vision of Gita for human development.

1. To improve our personality ( and hence our behavior) from the least desirable to the most desirable.
2. The most desirable personality or the goal of this human development is nothing short of expressing the various DIVINE QUALITIES in our personality, that is, in the end becoming Divine oneself.
3. All this is achieved by pursuing the path of The Yoga of Buddhi, which in turn is attained through the CONSTANT REMEMBRANCE OF THE LORD AND WORSHIPPING HIM WITH LOVE.. Our scriptures tell us to remember always: sarvada sarvakaleshu sarvatra Hari chintanam (always at all times everywhere, remember Lord Hari). Also, recitation of the Gayatri mantra helps tremendously.
4. The implications of the constant practice of the Buddhi Yoga are tremendous for the betterment of the individual, the society, and the world and large.

I would like to close with a quotation from Swami Vivekananda C. W. 1:17

“We hear, “be good,” and “be good” and “be good” taught all over the world. There is hardly a child born in any country in the world, who has not been told, “do not steal,” “do not tell a lie”.

All actions, internal and external , occur when the minde joins itself to certain centres, called the organs. Willingly or unwillingly, it is drawn to join itself to the centres, and that is why people do foolish deeds, and feel miserable which, if the mind were under control, they would not do. What would be the result of controlling the mind? It then would not join itself to the centres of perception and feeling and willing would be under control.”

## **BELUR MATH NEWS**

The birthday (*tithi puja*) of **Sri Ramakrishna** was celebrated at Belur Math on **Tuesday, 16 February**. Cooked prasada was served to about 38,000 devotees. Swami Smarananandaji, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, presided over the public meeting held in the afternoon. The public celebration held on Sunday, 21 February, drew more than a lakh of visitors who thronged the Math throughout the day. Cooked prasada was served to about **38,000** persons on that occasion.

**Smt. Sheila Dikshit, Chief Minister of Delhi**, declared open the **new medical block** at the Karol Bagh campus of our **Delhi** centre on 16 February.

**Chennai Math** has introduced an award called **Vivekananda Prashasti** to be presented to persons contributing in various fields, such as Education (Vidya), Music and Arts (Kala), Service (Seva) and Sports and allied sectors (Shakti), on the lines of Swami Vivekananda's teachings. The first award, **Vivekananda Vidya Prashasti**, was presented to Sri Atmakur Ramanaiah, Programme Officer of the Math's Publication Department, for his doctoral thesis on "Swami Vivekananda's Humanism" in Telugu. The award, comprising a citation, a statuette of Swamiji, a shawl and Rs. 50,000/- in cash, was presented to him during the public celebration of Sri Ramakrishna Jayanti at Chennai Math on 21 February.

**Swami Smarananandaji, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission**, inaugurated the newly built monks' quarters at **Chandipur Math** on 23 February.

**The Sanskrit College of Palai Ashrama** celebrated its **silver jubilee on 27 and 28 February**.

**A student of Class IX of our Narottam Nagar school**, who hails from the backward Tusta tribe of Tirap district, won the prestigious **National Talent Search Award for the year 2009**, comprising a certificate and Rs. 6000/-.

A staff member of **Deoghar Vidyapith**, Sri Sanat Halder by name, won the silver medal in the 34th National Yoga Championship in the age group 21-25 (Men) organized from 4 to 7 February at

Yamunanagar, Haryana, by the **Yoga Federation of India, an alliance recognized by the Indian Olympic Association**.

**Chandigarh** centre organized a **Child Eye Care Programme in which 2512 school children** from a poor locality of the city underwent eye check-up. Of these, 272 children with refractory errors were given free glasses.

**Jamshedpur** and **Ghatshila** centres celebrated National Youth Day (12 January) with processions, cultural competitions and speeches.

**Sri Shekhar Dutt, Governor of Chhattisgarh**, inaugurated the **physiotherapy unit** at our **Narainpur** hospital on 11 February.

**Twenty students** (seven from Class X and thirteen from class XII) of **Narainpur** school have won **Mukhyamantri Jnana Protsahan Puraskar** (cash award of Rs. 10,000/- each) for their excellent performance in the State Board Examinations 2008-09.

**Ranchi Morabadi** centre held **Kisan Melas** (farmers' fairs) at five villages last month; about 16,000 farmers participated in the **Melas**.

**Narainpur** centre organized a **Kisan Mela** (farmers' fair) on 6 February in which about 7500 farmers of 65 villages participated.

**Flood Relief: Andhra Pradesh:** From 20 to 23 February, **Hyderabad centre** distributed 133 looms to the poor weavers of Rajoli village in Mehaboobnagar district who had lost their looms in the recent flood there.

**Winter Relief:** 2561 blankets were distributed through the following centres to poor people affected by the severity of winter: **Belgaum** – 200, **Gol Park** – 650, **Kankurgachhi** – 200, **Muzaffarpur** – 400, **Ooty** – 300, **Taki** – 811. Besides, **Baghbazar Math** distributed 123 *chadars* and 123 sweaters to the needy.

**Distress Relief:** The following centres distributed various items, shown in brackets, to the needy: **Baghbazar** (assorted garments to 444 children, and textbooks, school uniforms, etc to 40 students), **Gol Park** (50 kg rice), **Taki** (1178 *saris* and 95 *lungis*), **Jalpaiguri** (400 *saris* and 80 children's garments).

## **SUMMARY OF PAST EVENTS**

**Sri Rama Navami** was celebrated on Wednesday **24<sup>th</sup> March 2010 at 6:30 pm**. The programme included bhajan, meditation

followed by Arati. More than 125 devotees participated.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Buddha Purnima** will be held on **Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2010 at 11:00am**. The programme will include bhajans, reading, puja, flower offering and prasad distribution.

**Spiritual Retreat with Swami Sridharanandaji** at Canmore, Alberta,

(Rockies) on Sept 4 & 5 2010. Seats are limited. If you are interested, please contact Vedanta Society of Toronto at 416-240 7262.

## **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 10, 2010**, 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:** **Sunday April 11, 2010 at 5:00 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 offer nine days a month (4 Tuesdays, 1 Thursday & 4 Saturdays) serving 300 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.**

**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.

**Due to increasing costs and environmental concerns, please note that henceforth, the Newsletter will be mailed only to those members/devotees who specifically request it. If you would like to continue to receive the newsletter by mail please indicate so by mail/fax/email or in the Membership/Renewal form. Those Members, who have already opted for the Newsletter to be sent by post in the 2010 Membership form, need not write again. Please note that the Newsletter is always available at the centre and can also be downloaded from the website.**

# *Vedanta Society of Toronto*

Minister and Teacher - Swami Kripamayananda, Ramakrishna Order of India

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### April 2010

| Sunday                                                                                                            | Monday    | Tuesday                             | Wednesday | Thursday                           | Friday                                                                     | Saturday                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                   |           |                                     |           |                                    | <u>2</u> 7:30pm<br>Scripture class:<br><i>'Vivekachudamani'</i>            | <u>3</u> 9:30am<br>Soup<br>Kitchen     |
| <u>4</u> 11 am Lecture:<br><i>'Creating Self-Image'</i>                                                           | <u>5</u>  | <u>6</u> 9:30am<br>Soup<br>Kitchen  | <u>7</u>  | <u>8</u> 9:30am<br>Soup<br>Kitchen | <u>9</u> 7:30pm<br>Scripture class:<br><i>'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'</i>  | <u>10</u><br>Vigil:<br>6 am to<br>6 pm |
| <u>11</u> 11am Lecture:<br><i>'Demeanor of the Realized'</i>                                                      | <u>12</u> | <u>13</u> 9:30am<br>Soup<br>Kitchen | <u>14</u> | <u>15</u>                          | <u>16</u> 7:30pm<br>Scripture class:<br><i>'Vivekachudamani'</i>           | <u>17</u> 9:30am<br>Soup<br>Kitchen    |
| VVM 1:30 pm                                                                                                       |           |                                     |           |                                    |                                                                            |                                        |
| <b>5:00PM<br/>Ram Nam</b>                                                                                         |           |                                     |           |                                    |                                                                            |                                        |
| <u>18</u> 11:00 am<br>Guest Lecture:<br><i>'Buddhism: Wisdom, Compassion and Liberation'</i><br>By Marco Mascarin | <u>19</u> | <u>20</u> 9:30am<br>Soup<br>Kitchen | <u>21</u> | <u>22</u>                          | <u>23</u> 7:30pm<br>Scripture class:<br><i>'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'</i> | <u>24</u> 9:30am<br>Soup<br>Kitchen    |
| <u>25</u> 11am Lecture:<br><i>'Rejuvenation through spirituality'</i>                                             | <u>26</u> | <u>27</u> 9:30am<br>Soup<br>Kitchen | <u>28</u> | <u>29</u>                          | <u>30</u> 7:30pm<br><br>NO SCRIPTURE<br>CLASS                              |                                        |
| VVM 1:30 pm                                                                                                       |           |                                     |           |                                    |                                                                            |                                        |

### ANNUAL SUMMER RETREAT

This year Annual Retreat will be conducted by SWAMI CHETANANANDAJI MAHARAJ, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and Head of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, USA on Saturday, June 19 and Sunday, June 20 at the Vedanta Society of Toronto. The Retreat will begin on Saturday with morning meditation at 6am. The Registration Fee for both the days is \$75. It includes two breakfasts, two lunches, one dinner, snacks and tea/coffee. If you want to register only for one day, the Registration Fee for Saturday is \$50 and for Sunday it is \$35. For Registration and further information please contact the Society at telephone number 416-240-7262 or email us at <[society@vedantatoronto.ca](mailto:society@vedantatoronto.ca)>.