



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

120 Emmett Ave. Toronto, ON CANADA M6M 2E6

Tel: (416) 240-7262 Fax: (416) 245-3764

Email: society@vedantatoronto.ca

Website: www.vedantatoronto.ca

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Never think you are weak. You may be weak, but the One you have taken refuge in is all-powerful. Therefore, deem yourself strong in his strength. When one is firmly convinced that God is his all in all, he feels an upsurge of supreme strength in his heart.

- 'Spiritual Treasures' - Swami Turiyananda, p 36

Words to Inspire

(From 'Spiritual Treasures' p 22 – 23)

Swami Atulananda wrote about Swami Turiyananda's way of teaching in the Shanti Ashrama:

Be yourself, and be strong. Realization is only for the strong, the pure, and the upright. Remember that you are the Atman. That gives the greatest strength and the courage. Be brave; break through the bondage of Maya. Be like the lion; don't tremble at anything. Swamiji has taught you that every soul is potentially divine. Realize your own divinity, and then you will realize that all souls are divine.

A cloud obscures the sun. We say, "There is no sun." But the sun is always shines. So the cloud of ignorance makes us believe that we are weak human beings. But the sun of the Atman is always shining. Remove the cloud of ignorance, and the Atman will reveal itself in your heart. When you realize that, then you are a man. Otherwise you are no different from beasts.

And when asked how this can be realized, he answered: "Through meditation. Meditation is the key that opens the door to Truth. Meditate, meditate! Meditate till light flashes in to your mind and the Atman stands self-revealed. Not by talk, not

by study-but by meditation alone the truth is known."

It was in this same spirit of trusting in God alone that the swami was very strongly opposed to all planning. There also he used almost the identical language: "Why do you plan? Why are you searching? Why do look so far ahead? Let Mother Plan. Her plan comes true. Human planning is all in vain if she does not consent. She knows what will happen. The future is an open book to her. Live in the present; make the best of your time and opportunities. Don't think of the future. Know for certain that Mother's will shall come to pass.

Trust in her. Only try to love her sincerely. Give yourself to her. Let her do with you as she wishes." But on one occasion he added, "Trusting in Mother does not mean idleness. Try to know her will, and then be up and doing like a man. Don't you see? I am never idle. The mind must be occupied in some way or another. If you don't do physical work you must use your mind – read, study, or meditate. And don't spend your time in idle gossip. Gossip breeds mischief. If you talk, talk of the Lord."

SCIENCE OF LIFE IN THE GITA

(Art of Right Action)

(Based on a talk given by Narendra N Bakhshi Prof. Emeritus, University of Saskatoon, Canada, at the Vedanta Society of Toronto on February 11, 2007)

My association with **Bhagavad-Gita** goes many years ago. As my understanding over this great book improved over the years, I consider it as one of the major texts on Vedanta. It is one of the three books (texts) considered as the final authority on the scriptural matters for the Hindus. The other two being the **Braham Sutras** and the **Upanishads**. If a question is raised as to what is the scriptural authority in Hinduism, the answer is this Scriptural Trinity – or the **Prasthanas Traya**

Bhagavan Vyasa has put the glory of the Gita beautifully in the Gita Dhyanam: “All the Upanishads are the Cows, the milker is Krishna – the cowherd boy – Partha (Arjuna) is the calf, the men of purified intellect are the drinkers and the milk is the supreme nectar of the Gita.”

A few years ago, I came across a commentary on the Gita by Revered Swami Ranganathanandaji. In the “Introduction” he recounts his meeting in 1949 with General Chowdhury who was “Commanding General” during Indian “Police Action” in Andhra Pradesh (Nizam / Hyderabad).

General Chowdhury received and did all the talking for the first half-an-hour which Swami was listening. Due to communist insurrection in some parts of the state he had to attend to the telephone quite often; but the conversation was going on.

Then Swami noticed on his table a copy of Bhagavad-Gita. That gave Swami an opportunity to do the talking. Swami asked ‘General Chowdhury, do you read the Gita? I see book on your table’. General Chowdhury, in a tired way he replied, ‘Of course, when I feel tired and want to find some peace of mind, I read a few lines from the ‘Gita’.

Swami said firmly, ‘That is not its purpose’. That remark took him by surprise and

he asked, ‘Do you mean to say that this book has other values than merely giving us little peace of mind’. Swami said, ‘Yes, that book is not meant merely to give peace of mind; it is meant to give you strength to serve the people, to make you a responsible citizen. It contains a comprehensive philosophy of life and work’. General Chowdhury was amazed and asked Swami again and again, ‘Do you mean to say that this book has a relevance to me as a Military Governor of this state? Swami said exactly so. We must realize that men and women of action, of responsibility, have the need for philosophy of life and action.

The Gita provides that philosophy calling it by the simple word, “Yoga”. We never understood it till now. Take the opening verse of the fourth chapter of the Gita, Sri Krishna tells us there: “I gave this philosophy of yoga to men of responsibility, so that through this philosophy, they will become strong to serve and protect the people, to nourish the people.” This is the purpose of this great book.

Swami stressed this again and again and General Chowdhury asked repeatedly, ‘Can I, the Governor of this state, learn any lesson from this book to become more efficient person?’ Swami said, ‘Yes. That is the purpose of this book, to inspire all men and women of responsibility to work for the good of all. That is the nature of this book. It is not meant for putting you to sleep. It is meant to wake you up. It is not merely to give you peace of mind.

The Gita expounds the practical application of that science. Hence, Swami Vivekananda considered the Gita as the best book of practical Vedanta. It became dramatically clear to me that not only the Gita is a great Vedantic text but it is much more.

I would call it the “Science of Life or the Art of Right Action”. As the Swami says, “This is a book of intense practicality and is the greatest

book on Practical Vedanta. It is capable of helping us to create a society of fully developed human beings. He goes on to say that if this philosophy is practical in life it will help us develop character, strength, efficiency in work and a spirit of service.

I am going to read a few pertinent excerpts from the Swami's Introduction.

"The Gita is a heroic message from a heroic teacher to a heroic pupil. Its universality makes it applicable to any human being any where in the world, to make him or her realize one's fullest human possibilities. Today we need a philosophy to guide our footsteps, so that we can meet the challenges of developing the immense manhood and womanhood.

"The Bhagavad-Gita Gita deals with human problems in a human way. That is why it has a tremendous appeal. It has inspired millions of people in various parts of the world whose whole outlook has changed. Thinkers and writers like Emerson, Walt Whitman and Thoreau in U.S.A and Carlyle in England, experienced this broadening and deepening of their outlook after studying the Gita and their writings also began to convey a new message.

"It is an attempt to workout the practical implications of the philosophy of the Upanishads to human problems. It does not give you a few dogmas, which you are not allowed to question. It invites all to question its teachings and then only follow them. Sri Krishna expounds his original philosophy of life for all people who are at work."

You see, I am an Engineer by profession. An Engineer deals in practical things, usefulness and efficiency. Therefore the question which arose in my mind was what has Gita to offer? What sort of help or guidance it offers in one's day-to-day life? Be that person a professional home maker, administrator, educator or whatever? Is there a useful message for us in it?

I would like to approach the situation in two stages. The first stage, I would call for lack of a better word, simply a 'UTILITARIAN

APPROACH' where, even the word God/Brahman does not enter into the picture. So what does Gita offer us?

Now let us picture the opening scenario of the Gita. Just before the battle, Arjuna is overwhelmed with sorrow, sitting on the seat of his chariot abandons his bow and arrows and simply gives up – by saying I will not fight. Now the Krishna – Parthasarathy says, 'Where did you get this attitude at this difficult hour? This is not a noble person's work and you will not be appreciated. Further, this action will not be a good fit for you. Stand up, get rid of your fear and do your duty.' If at the times of a crisis, we remember these words of the Gita-Acharya, it will give us strength and courage and half of the battle is won.

Swami Vivekananda has said "If one reads this one shloka, he gets all the merits of reading the entire Gita" In this one shloka imbedded lies the whole message of Gita – Strength and nothing else but strength to face up to the problems "Whatever they may be?" Swami Vivekananda has also narrated this concept by "Face the Brutes".

All of us want to be happy. All our pursuits are in one form or the other – Pursuits of Happiness. Be this happiness physical, biological or psychological. As a matter of fact, in general our education is simply a means to provide financial wherewithal, so that we purchase or obtain toys of every kind.

The bottom line is that all these pursuits will ultimately provide with happiness. Actually happiness is rather weak narrow and limited word. Once the toy is obtained, I am happy for a while. But after sometime, the desire for another toy makes me unhappy.

Here is the secret of achieving happiness. A person who is having proper life style will get the wisdom. The wisdom brings pure thoughts leading to meditation. The pure thoughts bring peace and finally happiness.

What is the meaning of proper life? This includes quantity and quality food being taken, recreation, actions, sleep and wakefulness. On the other hand seeing good, listening good and having good input for all our senses. Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that one who leads the proper life style will remove all our pain and sorrows.

Unfortunately things do not work that easily or seem to work that way due to our habit of throwing away or not following. One of the good example is that New Year Resolutions. Most of them fail to follow the resolutions.

We are the creator of our own destiny. Gita explains how and why? Our nature and personality is determined by inheritance of previous lives. Our nature is a unique combination of the three qualities of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

Then what is the way? Here the second stage needs to be added to our self effort. The Lord Krishna tells the method. He says “Just remember me and lead Dharmic life”

‘To those who are ever devoted, worship me with love, I give the yoga of discrimination by which they come to me. Then out of pure compassion for them, dwelling in their hearts, I destroy the ignorance born darkness, by the luminous lamp of wisdom.’ We achieve pure thoughts through his grace.

Thus there is no dependence on anybody or anything. Our own power of discrimination is evolved to the highest extent and tells us what right action under given circumstance is. As we know, pure thoughts bring peace and happiness at the end.

In order to achieve pure thoughts the discriminative power of faculty of intelligence has to become completely of divine nature. Through our proper life style and efforts also we can perform actions of dharma. The transformation of personality to divine nature

takes place. Scriptures also tells that Success or fulfillment in our actions is obtained by achieving the quality of divine nature in us.

The proper life style gives us self confidence which leads us to self satisfaction. Self satisfaction leads to self sacrifice and self sacrifice leads to self realization.

I will close this with the following.

‘If there is Righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in Character.

If there is Beauty in Character, there will be Harmony in Home.

If there is Harmony in Home, there will be Order in the Nation.

If there is Order in the Nation, there will be peace in the world.’

In conclusion, what does the ‘Science of Life or Art of making Right Action entails?

Gita tells us, we need two types of combined efforts.

- 1. Fearlessness and Courage.**
- 2. A proper life style (Dharmic Life style) combined with remembrance of the Lord– always, everywhere and at all times.**

Wherever is Krishna (The Lord of Yoga), where Partha (the wielder of the bow) is, there are Prosperity, Victory, Welfare and Constant Justice?

Here Arjuna represents us.

“Self effort to the best of our ability along with remembrance of the Lord”

With these two we march on the battlefield of life and achieve victory, welfare, prosperity for us and for the society.

BELUR MATH NEWS

The birthday (tithi puja) of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated at Belur Math on Monday, 19 February. Cooked prasada was served to about 31,000 devotees. Swami Smarananandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, presided over the public meeting held in the afternoon. The public celebration held on Sunday, 25 February, drew more than 1,00,000 visitors who thronged the Math throughout the day. Cooked prasada was served to about 39,000 persons on that occasion.

A town centre of Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Belgaum, has been started with the land, buildings, etc received from Ramakrishna Vivekananda Sevashrama, Belgaum (popularly known as Bhate's house where Swami Vivekananda had stayed for 4 days in October 1892). The address of the centre is: Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, 'Datta Kripa', 3553 A/2, Swami Vivekananda Marg, Near City Corporation, Belgaum 590002, Karnataka; Phone: (0831) 2431230.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Annual Summer Retreat: June 23-24, 2007

Annual Spiritual Retreat will be held at the centre during June 23rd – June 24th 2007. Swami Atmarupanandaji Maharaj of the

Hollywood centre will conduct the Retreat. The basic scripture for the Retreat this year is **Kena Upanishad**.

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 14, 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: April 15th 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.

VIVEKANANDA STUDY CIRCLE: A biweekly discussion group on the works of Swami Vivekananda and related topics. Location: 143 North Building at the University of Toronto at Mississauga; time 3 - 5 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: This month, the Soup Kitchen will be held on April 12, 19 and 26th. 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 programme, and arrangements can be made by phone for weekday and Saturday visits. We carry selected titles from the Ramakrishna Vivekananda literature collections, as well as other Vedantic materials

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Minister and Teacher - Swami Kripamayanda, Ramakrishna Order of India

APRIL 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p><u>1</u> 11am-Lecture: <i>Sadhana in the Upanishads</i> by Prof. V. Balaji</p> <p>VVM: 1-30 pm</p>	<p><u>2</u></p>	<p><u>3</u></p>	<p><u>4</u></p>	<p><u>5</u></p>	<p><u>6</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: <i>Sermon on the Mount</i></p>	<p><u>7</u></p>
<p><u>8</u> 11 am- Lecture: <i>Resurrection and Reincarnation</i></p>	<p><u>9</u></p>	<p><u>10</u> 3-5pm <u>Vivekananda Study Circle</u> at UofT(M)</p>	<p><u>11</u></p>	<p><u>12</u> 9 am Soup Kitchen</p>	<p><u>13</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: <i>Tattvabodha</i></p>	<p><u>14</u> Vigil: 6 am to 6 pm</p>
<p><u>15</u> 11am-Lecture: <i>Practice of Truthfulness</i></p> <p>VVM: 1-30 pm RamNam:5pm</p>	<p><u>16</u></p>	<p><u>17</u></p>	<p><u>18</u></p>	<p><u>19</u> 9am Soup Kitchen</p>	<p><u>20</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: <i>The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna</i></p>	<p><u>21</u></p>
<p><u>22</u> 11am-Lecture: <i>What is Renunciation?</i> by Prof. Ram Murty</p>	<p><u>23</u></p>	<p><u>24</u> 3-5pm <u>Vivekananda Study Circle</u> at UofT(M)</p>	<p><u>25</u></p>	<p><u>26</u> 9am Soup Kitchen</p>	<p><u>27</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: <i>Tattvabodha</i></p>	<p><u>28</u></p>
<p><u>29</u> 11am- Lecture: <i>Humility</i></p> <p>VVM: 1-30 pm</p>	<p><u>30</u></p>					

FROM THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" – *Jesus*