



# Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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## Newsletter December 2008

### Words to Inspire

“I am your Guru; I know whether you are making progress or not. How can you understand it? You’ll achieve everything, you’ll achieve everything. Most obstacles in worship are not external; they are internal. They will gradually fall off one another by taking the Master’s name and by meditation. Do your duty. Don’t pay attention to whether the blemishes of the mind are persisting or not.”  
*(The Gospel of Holy Mother –page 201)*

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT ACCORDING TO VEDANTA

(Page: 104-105)

*The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.*

*But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*

In order for us to fix our hearts in the eternal and to renounce the ephemeral objects of the world, our eyes must be “single.” We must not run after this or that object, but must concentrate with one-pointed devotion upon God. For the attainment of illumination, says the Gita,

the will is directed singly towards one ideal. When a man lacks this discrimination, his will wanders in all directions, after innumerable aims.

As long as man lacks spiritual discrimination his “whole body shall be full of darkness.” He continues to live in ignorance, and the true Self, the divine light within him, remains covered.

Concentration of the mind on the chosen ideal of God is the way to uncover that divine light.

This concentration, then, purifies what enters the consciousness through the senses. “The light of the body is the eye,” says Christ, comparing the eye to a window through which the outside world enters. Through the five senses we gather impressions and the sum total of these impressions make up our character. If we see good, we take in good; if we see evil, we take in evil. As a Vedic prayer says, “With our ears may we hear what is good. With our eyes may we behold thy righteousness.” Wherever we look, instead of the names and forms of things, we must learn to see God, the all-pervading Spirit. In this way, rather than distracting us from our ideal, every object in the universe becomes an aid in God-realization.

And so the light of God pours in upon us until eventually our “whole body shall be full of light.” The scriptures speak of great souls whose inner illumination became objectively visible; their bodies actually became full of light.

## **SADHANA IN THE UPANISHADS – AN APPROACH (Part II)**

**V. BALAJI**

*(Continued from November 2008 Newsletter)*

Let us return to the goal of this sadhana. Here the Chandogya Upanishad comes up with the formula “Make the resolve, make the design, forge the will”

The process which we wish to suggest is then to trace for instance this particular phrase to its origins. In the process of tracing, we would inevitably branch out into a myriad related and connected words and symbols. It is in this manner of dwelling and living and keenly listening with the ear behind the ear (see Kena Upanishad) that we meditate on the Upanishadic mantra. Indeed, the Kena identifies this inner sense with Brahman itself! Again, doesn't Brahman itself mean the expanding word?

Thus, the process of making the resolve is to first allow the profound Upanishadic phrase to vibrate and pervade the substance of our being. To do this, I will take one word from the phrase, namely, .t and examine it with patience its occurrence elsewhere with the aim of comprehending it, by studying the different contexts in which it is used.

It occurs at the very end of the Isha Upanishad, where it comes as an injunction to one who, having realised oneness with Highest, is choosing to return to complete his life's course but strengthened with the realization (Tathagata). It says<sup>3</sup> “Remember what was willed, resolved, remember what has been done, achieved, remember (even like a memory of the future!) what further needs to be done<sup>4</sup>. In other words,

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<sup>3</sup> Here we have quoted the Isha from the Madhyandina Recension of the of the Shukla Yajurveda of which the Isha Upanishad is the last chapter. We note that the common text of the Isha is from the so-called Kanva Recension which is different from the above quote in that, it repeats the first phrase

<sup>4</sup> Jellaluddin Rumi says “We look back and analyze the events of our lives, but there is another way of seeing, a

one may say it stresses a constant triple memory, to strengthen and revivify the Will, to examine the resolve, to perpetually measure oneself in this light.

The word Smar is related to Smriti, a deep word which means a lightning remembrance, indeed a memory which brings to experience the thing remembered<sup>5</sup>

So by Smriti is meant an immediate awareness of what one is seeking, an intuitive reference to the constant presence of the subject meditated upon.

The Chandogya Upanishad describes a few principles which enable a realisation of this pure and lightning remembrance. In translation, it reads “In the purity of the intake is the purity of the constituent substance of our existence. In the purity of the substance is the state of moveless remembrance and the attainment of this moveless remembrance cuts asunder the knots of ignorance.”

Thus, Smriti is an intuition carrying a potency to cut asunder knots of ignorance. Smara comes in the Gita when Sri Krishna enjoins Arjuna, “Remember me and fight on” This is the key. Note again that the word “remember” is “to hold in the mind purposefully”.

One may also indulge in bit of fanciful etymology and say, “re-member” is essentially reconstitute repeatedly in one's consciousness. So Sri Krishna is advocating a double poise, where I need to have the divine in total awareness in my

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backward-and-forward-at-once vision, that is not rationally understandable.”

<sup>5</sup> Compare pratyabubhutam, in Prasna Upanishad IV, 5, which could be translated as proximate becoming.

mind and at the very same time I am expected to fight a war of huge magnitude. The Gita brilliantly brings in the extreme conflicting positions to highlight the spiritual state that is expected to be realised. A double-poise needs to be developed where the conscious mind itself is forked into a duality and this is key to a life of intense action and at the very same time being in full yoga.

The famous Rig Vedic line, so often repeated in the Upanishads, namely *dva suparna, sayuja sakhay a, saman'e vriksh'e, parishashvaja*, ... gives a beautiful description of this state.<sup>6</sup>

There is no better description of this poise than in Sri Ramakrishna's words where he says, "Let your left hand touch the feet of the Divine while your right hand works away". Sri Ramakrishna is infact hinting that the remembrance is actually experienced as a sensation! Indeed, in a different context Sri Ramakrishna brings this out in a delightful manner when he says that this double-poise is somewhat like the tooth-ache, where I am aware all the time of the dull ache but yet I carry on all my work.

Although we have digressed and wandered into various realms, we believe that this process of study of the Upanishad and its sadhana inevitably leads one to a direct communion with Brahman, the Word behind the

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<sup>6</sup> This line has been interpreted by various people as depicting the dual states of *jivatma* and *paramatma*, but I beg to differ. The line occurs in the Rig Veda and is the first among three lines which needs to come together if we wish to see it from the viewpoint of the Rishi *Dirghatamas* who created it. It talks of two parts in us, both steeped in consciousness, but one fully participating in existence and the other the beholder who sees but does not participate.

We give here its translation of comment.

Two birds beautiful of wing, yoke-fellows, cling fast to a common tree. Of them one eats of the sweet fruit, while the other eats not but regards from above.

There, where the birds beautiful of wing, in a poise of perfect knowledge, chant with their eyes ever open their enjoyment of immortality, there, the Lord, the Herdsman of the whole universe, the contemplative wise-one enters me, the unripe one.

word. The sadhana that we have learnt from Sri Aurobindo is best summarized in his own words:

"No human intellect can be permitted to hold the keys of the Sruti and fix for us our gate of entrance and paths of our passage. The Sruti itself is the eternal authority on the Sruti.

The text has to be studied with a great patience, a great passivity, waiting for experience and waiting for light and then waiting for still more light. . . . if a man can make his mind like a blank slate, if he can enter into the condition of bottomless passivity proper to the state of the all-embracing *Chaitanya Atman*, not attempting to fix what the Truth shall be but allowing Truth to manifest herself in his soul, he will find then that it is the nature of the Sruti to reveal perfectly its own message."

Let me close by saying that the sadhana outlined in this article will take one far but by its very nature, it stops short of the highest realisation. Hear what the *Taittiriya Upanishad* says on this "

The Highest is that from which all expressions rebound back", *yat'o vach'o nivartant'e*.<sup>7</sup>

**(Concluded)**

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<sup>7</sup> Upon that tree where dwell these birds savouring the honey-fruit, begetting their children, there, on the summit they say, lies the sweet *pippala* and none can attain it who knows not the Father.

Rig Veda I.164.20, 21, 22: Rishi *Dirghatamas Auchchataya* The two Birds who comradely occupy the Tree of Life are the dual aspects of the Deity, a *syzygy* (compare the word *sayuja*) of aspects as it were, who on the one hand sees all things and on the other eats of the fig and of the others perched below. These birds chant with

ever open eyes their share of life, taste of honey, and beget their children, but whom none can reach at the summit of the Tree who knows not the Father, the great Herdsman of the Universe. And He whose being is Contemplative (*dhirah*) has also made in me that and made ready here.

## **BELUR MATH NEWS**

On 13 October, the Government of Delhi State organized a workshop for NGOs and others, under the Revised National TB Control Programme (RNTCP), in which Dr Yoganand Shastri, Health Minister of Delhi State, presented a memento to our **Delhi** centre in honour of its outstanding service in the area of TB control.

A research paper of Dr T S Suryanarayan, Head of the Department, Faculty of Plant Biology & Plant Biotechnology, **Vivekananda College, Chennai**, (a unit of **Chennai Vidyapith**), published in a British journal *Mycological Research* has been adjudged as one of the ten most-cited articles in the last two years.

A student of class IX of **Deoghar Vidyapith** won the Champions Trophy at the National Science Seminar on *Water Crisis on Earth: Problems and Remedies* organized by the National Council of Science Museums (NCSM), jointly with the Birla Industrial and Technological Museum (BITM), for the year 2008.

**Durga Puja** was celebrated in Belur Math from 6 to 9 October with all solemnity. The weather was fine on all the four days, and thousands of devotees thronged Belur Math grounds to witness the Puja and to receive the blessings of the Divine Mother. The Kumari Puja performed on 7 October drew huge crowds, and the Sandhi Puja on 8 October early morning was also attended by many devotees. Kolkata Doordarshan telecast live the Puja at different times on all the days. Cooked Prasad was served to about 90,000 devotees during the four days, and on the Ashtami day the number was more than 42,000.

**Viveknagar** (Tripura) centre organized a workshop on health awareness and blood donation on 2 October in connection with the National Blood Donation Day. Sri Tapan Chakraborty, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Tripura, inaugurated the workshop and Sri Manik Sarkar, Chief Minister of Tripura, attended the programme as the chief guest. The workshop was followed by a blood donation camp in which 60 persons, including the Chief Minister, donated blood.

**Porbandar** centre has launched a Value Education Programme to inculcate higher values in the students of schools and colleges in and around Porbandar through activities such as arranging exhibitions on Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda, talks on value

education, CD shows on personality development, and distribution of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature

**Vivekananda Eye Care Centre** at **Rajkot** Ashrama was inaugurated on 21 September.

**Chennai Math** held the annual meeting of **rural youths at its premises on 15 August**. About **1100** beneficiaries of the rural projects of the Math, which included nursing assistant trainees, computer trainees, automobile repairing trainees and mat-weaving trainees, took part in the meeting.

**Belgaum** centre has launched a project named *Viveka Vahini* to carry the message of Swami Vivekananda to different educational institutions and rural areas through a mobile unit with audio-visual equipment, pictorial exhibits, and printed literature on the life and teachings of Swamiji. The project will particularly focus on character-building and personality development of the youth.

Dr Z L Mkhize, Minister for Finance and Economic Development, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, inaugurated Ramakrishna Abalindi Home (Inanda) on 6 August. These facilities were built by the Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa, **Durban**, and handed over on that day to the office-bearers of the Home. The Home with 45 beds, intended for terminally-ill patients, will provide a much-needed facility for HIV / AIDS and cancer patients in the area.

### **Relief Work:**

**Katihar** – 2800 kg *chira*, 1600 kg sugar, 1600 packets of biscuits, 800 torches, 900 *saris*, 600 *dhotis* and *lungis*, and 2040 sets of children's garments to 1200 families from Madhepura district who had taken shelter in temporary camps at Rupauli town in Purnea district and to 1500 families of Pranpur block in Katihar district.

**Muzaffarpur** – 18,000 kg rice, 2000 kg *dal*, 1000 kg soya bean, 225 kg sugar, 3000 kg *chana*, 90 kg biscuits, 125 litre drinking water, 100 steel plates, 100 steel glasses, 3100 *saris*, 100 *dhotis*, 6000 assorted garments, 72 blankets, 6100 bags, 100 soap bars, 5500 candles, 3200 matchboxes and 2,18,500 halogen tablets to 7500 flood-affected families of 9 villages in Saharsa and Supaul districts.

**Patna** – 5160 *saris*, 2580 *dhotis*, 5160 blankets, 2,58,000 halogen tablets and 2580 utensil sets (each set containing 5 steel plates, 5 steel mugs, 5 steel spoons, 1 steel ladle, 2 aluminium pots, etc) to 2580 flood-affected families of 7 villages in Supaul district.

## SUMMARY OF PAST EVENTS

The Annual General Meeting was held on November 23, 2008 at 11:00 am. There were

134 members in attendance (39 present and 95 proxies).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**New Year Kalpataru Utsav** will be celebrated on **Thursday, Jan 1, 2009 at 5:00 pm**. The programme will consist of bhajans, puja, homa, flower offering followed by prasad distribution.

**Swami Vivekananda Birth Anniversary Tithi Puja** will be celebrated on

**Saturday, Jan 17, 2009 at 11.00 am**. The programme consists of bhajans, puja, homa, flower offering followed by prasad distribution.

**Sri Ramakrishna Birth Anniversary Celebration** will be held on **Sunday March 1, 2009 at 11.00 am**.

## 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, December 13, 2008**, 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 December 14, 2008 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 now served four days (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays and Thursdays) a month at Roncesvalles Food Sharing, 263 Roncesvalles Avenue, Toronto M6R 2L9. 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

### December 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture class: 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>6</u>
<u>7</u> <u>11:00 am</u> Lecture: 'The Practice of Japa'  <u>VVM: 1-30 pm</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen	<u>12</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture class: 'Viveka Chudamani'	<u>13</u> Vigil: 6 am to 6 pm
<u>14</u> <u>11:00 am</u> Lecture: 'Holy Mother's Universal Message'  RAM NAM 5:00 pm	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen	<u>19</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture class: 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>20</u>
<u>21</u> 11:00 am: <b>Sri Sarada Devi Birthday Celebration</b>	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u> 6:00pm <b>Christmas Eve Celebration</b>	<u>25</u> <b>Winter Recess Begins</b>	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u>
<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>31</u>			

Copies of the Vedanta Society's 2007-2008 Annual Report, Financial Report, and the 2007 AGM Minutes (distributed to attendees at the Vedanta Society's 2008 Annual General Meeting on November 23) are available to any member of the Society. Interested members are requested to contact the Vedanta Society.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

**Vedanta Society of Toronto wishes  
a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.  
May peace and spiritual blessings be yours in the coming year and  
always!**

The regular activities of the Vedanta Society will remain suspended from December 25, 2008 to January 10, 2009 for the Winter Recess. However, morning Meditation from 6-7am and Evening Prayer & Meditation from 6-8 pm will continue daily during the Winter Recess as well.