



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

Newsletter February 2010

Words to Inspire

The Mantra purifies the body. Man becomes pure by repeating the Mantra of God..... It is said, 'the human teacher utters the Mantra into the ear; but God breathes the spirit into the soul.'

-Mother Speaks on Japa & Meditation-

HOW MOTHER PURIFIED OTHERS

(From Prabuddha Bharata – Jan 2004)

Holy Mother accomplished this stupendous task of purifying her disciples in various ways. One was by giving them spiritual initiation. It is said that during initiation the sins of disciple are transmitted to the guru. Holy Mother used to say, 'I impart the mantra out of pity. They become importunate, they weep, and their sight fills me with mercy. Out of compassion I grant initiation. Else what do I gain? One has to take over sins by giving initiation. Due to unholy company an average individual's mind becomes impure, but the minds of highly evolved souls like Holy Mother remain untarnished. However, their body suffers. Mother said, 'If we don't take over sins and sufferings and digest them, who else will?' And again, 'A pure person's touch brings joy.'

Second, Mother purified others by loving assurance and making them confess and surrender their good and bad deeds to God. This was important for those disciples who had a severe sense of guilt and who used to be tormented, as it were, by the psychological burden of their sins. Mother would ask such disciples to specifically utter, 'I surrender all the sins committed by me till today.' By such a declaration, their sense of guilt would be removed and they would plunge into spiritual practices with greater and unhindered zeal. Such a confession and repentance is a standard psychological technique accepted in all religions as a sure way getting rid of the burden of past sins. This act of confession and getting initiated into spiritual life after giving up the past life with all its actions is called in theology 'conversion' and is considered equivalent to rebirth. God gives, as it were, a chance to the individual to start a new life after relinquishing his past evil deeds done consciously or unconsciously, knowingly or unknowingly. This psychological process is sometimes termed 'justification'. But this alone is not enough to turn the person into saint. To become really sanctified, one must follow the path shown by the guru, perform spiritual Practices in accordance with his instructions and never repeat

evil deeds. This is 'sanctification'. Holy Mother utilized both these methods to purify others. First, she would instill confidence and faith in them by making them realize their spiritual relationship with her; this would eliminate their guilty feelings and raise them to do spiritual practices. She would say, 'I have done what I had to do at the time of initiation; but if you want to enjoy the fruit thereof, do spiritual practice.'

A woman belonging to a respectable family had gone astray due to some bad impulse. She felt repentant and by good luck came to Holy Mother. She stood at the doorway trembling with guilt and said, 'Mother, what will be my lot? I am not fit to draw nearer to you in this holy chapel.' Mother stepped forward and throwing her holy arms round the woman, said, 'Come, my daughter, come in. You have realized what sin is, and you are repentant. Come I shall initiate you. Lay everything at the Master's feet, and cast away all fear.'

Third, Holy Mother would herself perform spiritual practices on behalf of her disciples, especially those who were spiritually weak, or had to face social or personal difficulties in life, and who were unable to do regular japa and meditation.

Finally, her superhuman love transformed the character of the worst sinners. Amjad, a notable figure in the drama of Holy Mother's life, was a known robber. But he used to behave like docile child in her presence. He would even prove a most resourceful person when anything special was required by her.

There was such a tremendous soothing and purifying power in Holy Mother's personality that whoever came under its spell would feel elevated. Devotees were convinced that if they saluted her in the morning, or even just saw her once, their whole day would pass joyfully. There was a certain devotee who felt that his whole year would pass peacefully if he but once visited Holy Mother at Jayrambati!

Detach and Rise

(Based on a talk given by Swami Kripamayanda at the
Vedanta Society of Toronto)

Many devotees get spiritual initiation and they repeat the name of God and perform other spiritual disciplines for many years, and yet they complain that they don't find much change in themselves. What is the reason for this? Why does the mind not rise? What would be the cause that holds it down?

If we examine our own mind, it is not that there is no change. There is certainly growth; but we are not satisfied with the pace of the change. If we want to make more rapid progress, we will have to strengthen our detachment from anything that is not in harmony with our spiritual ideal. Correspondingly, we will have to strengthen our attachment to the spiritual ideal.

Our idea of God, the foundation of all joy, is not yet clear. We are still attached and seek enjoyment from the things of the world. The things of the world include material possessions, relations, and our own body and also our own set of ideas and thoughts. We are attached to what we think and we don't want to really address the question "Who am I?". Deep in our heart our mind says, I am this body. Unless I am detached from this body, we cannot realize the spiritual consciousness.

In the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, we find a story of a few friends who came from the village to a nearby town by boat to enjoy. They consumed alcohol and after enjoying the day, they had to return back to their village by the boat. They all were very happy. There was beautiful moonlight, they all boarded the boat and started rowing. They rowed the whole night and talked happily. Next morning they found

to their utter surprise that they had not moved an inch. They knew that they were not so much intoxicated so as to realize that they did not row. Then one person amongst them asked, "Did you remove the anchor?" Then they found that they had not removed the anchor. That is the reason that in spite of their rowing all night, the boat did not move an inch. This indicates how important it is to take off or detach the mind to move forward.

Currently, what are the strong attachments that we have to deal with? First is the strong notion of "I", everything that relates to "I" which is "My". We get attached to the spouse, children, property; and not only that: we get attached to even our qualifications, our ideas and opinions. And finally, there is the attachment to name and fame. Swami Vivekananda said that all attachments may be given up, but this last attachment to name and fame is very difficult to give up.

We may ask whether it is wrong to think about our well-being and the well-being of our relations. No, there is nothing wrong in that. However, Vedanta points out that all of these are changing; they are not permanent. If we equate our well-being with changing quantities, there is always uncertainty and this will disturb us. As long as we are attached to the changeful, we should expect the ups and downs of life.

Attachment to impermanent things brings fear, worries and anxieties. What will happen to my things – my money invested in stock exchange, my house, my property? There is no harm in investing in the stock exchange but if

swings in the market disturb us, it is better not to get involved. Let the money grow or shrink. There is always loss and gain in the stock market. This little wisdom or discrimination will make us free from the attachment to money. What will happen even if I become a millionaire? I will still live in the same house. The bank balance just increases, nothing really changes.

As we reflect and become aware of all our attachments, a first reaction may be to think that we have to make drastic changes in our life. We may think that it is our duties in the world that is causing all our attachments and that we should give those up. However, we need to know that detachment is not to run away from fulfilling our duties.

Sri Ramakrishna said –You don't have to run away into the forest to become detached. Live in the world like a mud fish. Let not the worldliness touch your mind. Whatever you do, do it as an offering to God and whatever God gives, accept that without any questioning. That is the ideal way to detachment.

Detachment is independent of a person's lifestyle. Detachment is a mental state. It is not that one person who possesses so many things is attached, and another person who does not possess anything is detached. Detachment and attachment is totally a mental state. Swami Vivekananda says – A beggar may be more attached than a king. The beggar may be attached to his very small possession, whereas the king

may not be attached to his whole kingdom.

Thus, we have to introspect a little and start to cultivate some detachment to the changing things of the world. We need to cultivate some renunciation. But what exactly is renunciation? When Sri Ramakrishna asked 'M' this question, 'M' said that it is detachment from worldly objects. Sri Ramakrishna said 'No your statement is not fully complete. Renunciation is detachment from worldly objects *and attachment to God.*' *Vishaye virag, Ishware anurag* – This means detachment from worldly objects and attachment to God.

How will we practice detachment unless attachment is there? Something has to work in the mind. If we put the mind on money or property or the sense enjoyments, it will get attached and we will get misery and bondage. Why? Because they are changing and variable. They come and go. Then where do you put this mind? We have to detach this mind from worldly objects and *attach* it to God, where there is purity, where there is real love, where there is permanence. This detachment from the worldly objects and attachment to God is what is meant by spiritual practice.

This kind of detachment and attachment makes us peaceful under all circumstances. Never will you be disturbed if you are detached and attached in this manner. By practicing this kind of detachment we rise in spiritual life.

Spiritual Retreat with Swami Sridharanandaji at Canmore, Alberta (Rockies) on Sept 4 & 5 2010. Registration fee \$200 per person. Seats are limited. If you are interested, please contact Vedanta Society of Toronto at 416-240 7262.

BELUR MATH NEWS

The 100th **Annual General Meeting** of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at Belur Math on Sunday, 20 December. It was chaired by Swami **Atmasthanandaji**, President, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission.

The birthday of **Holy Mother** was celebrated at Belur Math on Tuesday, 8 December. Thousands of devotees attended the celebration throughout the day. Cooked Prasad was served to about 29,000 devotees. Swami Shivamayanandaji chaired the public meeting held in the afternoon.

In a function held at the **Institute of Culture**, Kolkata, on 18 November, Sri Gopalkrishna Gandhi, then Governor of West Bengal, presented Vivekananda Medal Award, comprising a cash award of 50,000 rupees and a citation, to Prof. Brij Nath Kaul of Srinagar, Kashmir. Swami Prabhanandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, attended the programme as the chief guest.

The Regional Braille Press of Blind Boys' Academy, **Narendrapur**, won the National and State Awards for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, 2009, in recognition of its publication of Braille literature in six languages for the last 43 years. The President of India and the Governor of West Bengal handed over the awards at New Delhi and Kolkata respectively on 3 December, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Sri Dorjee Khandu, Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, inaugurated the MRI unit and two-bed haemo-dialysis unit at **Itanagar** hospital on 6 December.

Swami Atmasthanandaji, President, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, laid the foundation stone for the proposed building complex comprising School of Indian Heritage, School of Mathematical Sciences and Central-Library-cum-Computer-Centre at the Belur Math main campus of **Vivekananda University** on 30 December, Swami Turiyanandaji's birthday.

Two students of **Vivekananda University**, Department of Sanskrit Studies, won the following prizes in the *Akhila Bharata Shastriya Samskrita Bhashana Spardha* (47th All-India Sanskrit Elocution Contest) conducted by Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan (Deemed University under

Government of India) at their Jaipur (Rajasthan) campus from 30 November to 2 December. Students of our polytechnics in West Bengal secured the following ranks in the All Bengal Diploma Examination held by the West Bengal State Council of Technical Education in June 2009.

Shilpamandira (**Saradapitha**): Mechanical Engineering: 1 & 2; Civil Engineering: 1.

Shilpapitha (**Belgharia**): Electrical Engineering: 1 & 2.

Vadodara centre organized a seminar on "Lessons on Excellence and Leadership from Indian Culture" on 3 December. Sri P N Bhagwati, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India, and many other distinguished persons addressed the gathering of students, teachers, government officials and professionals. The centre also felicitated one hundred outstanding students on this occasion.

Narottam Nagar centre organized a two-day teachers' conference on 3 and 4 December on *Building Quality in Education: Sharing of Best Practices*.

Vivekananda University, Belur, and **Shikshanamandira** (Residential College of Teacher Education, a unit of **Saradapitha**, Belur) jointly organized an international conference on *Education: Indian and Global Perspectives* on 12 and 13 December. Swami Prabhanandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, presided over the inaugural session.

Vidyamandira (Arts and Science College of **Saradapitha**, Belur) organized an educational exhibition from 23 to 25 December, which was inaugurated by Swami Atmasthanandaji, President, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission.

A student of class X of **Mysore** Vidyashala, namely R A Srisagar, bagged the third prize in the drawing competition at the National Children's Meet organized by National Bal Bhavan, New Delhi, in November.

Out of about 4000 participants in the Doodle 4 Google *My India Contest* at the national level, two students of **Mysore** Vidyashala, namely Kanishk U Navale of Class X and S Sushanth Venkatesh of Class IX, secured places among the top 15.

SUMMARY OF PAST EVENTS

Kalpataru Utsav was celebrated on **Friday 1st Jan 2010 at 5:00 pm**. The programme included bhajans, meditation followed by Arati. More 250 devotees participated.

Swami Vivekananda Birth Anniversary Celebrations was held on **Sunday 10th Jan 2010 at 11.00 am**. The programme consisted bhajans, puja, havan, flower offering followed by prasad distribution. Close to 175 devotees participated.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Ram Navami will be celebrated on **Wednesday 24th March 2010 at 6.30 pm**.

The programme includes Ram Nam, puja, flower offering followed by refreshments.

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, February 13, 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 February 14, 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 seven days a month (3 Tuesdays, 1 Thursday & 3 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.

Who is the best devotee of God? It is he who sees, after the realization of Brahman that God alone has become all living beings, the universe, and the twenty-four cosmic principles. One must discriminate at first, saying 'Not this, not this', and reach the roof. After that one realizes that the steps are made of the same materials as the roof, namely, brick, lime, and brick-dust. The devotee realizes that it is Brahman alone that has become all these — the living beings, the universe, and so on.

I tell you the truth: there is nothing wrong in your being in the world. But you must direct your mind toward God; otherwise you will not succeed. Do your duty with one hand and with the other hold to God. After the duty is over you will hold to God with both hands.

From- Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna

Vedanta Society of Toronto

Minister and Teacher - Swami Kripamayananda, Ramakrishna Order of India

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 2010

Sunday	Mon	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>6</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen
<u>7</u> 11am Lecture: ' <i>Befriending the Mind</i> ' VVM 1:30 pm	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>12</u> 6:30pm Maha Shivaratri	<u>13</u> Vigil: 6 am to 6 pm
<u>14</u> 11am Lecture: ' <i>From Unreal to the Real</i> ' 5:00 PM Ram Nam	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>20</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen
<u>21</u> 11:00 am Sri Ramakrishna Birth Anniversary Celebration	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: ' <i>Vivekachudamani</i> '	<u>27</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen
<u>28</u> 11am Lecture: ' <i>Sri Krishna Chaitanya</i> ' VVM 1:30 pm						

Vedanta Society of Toronto has the following DVD's available for Sale. Any members / devotees / friends, who are interested can obtain the same from society. Shipping and handling charges are at actual.

Discourses delivered by Swami Sridharananda at the Vedanta Society of Toronto are available for sale :

1. Retreat on the Bhagavad Gita held in Sept. 2009- CD & DVD set - \$40.

Shipping and handling extra.

2. Reminiscences of Swami Virajananda- DVD set - \$ 15.00. Shipping and handling extra.