



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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Words to Inspire

“Controlling all senses, one should sit integrated, deeming Me supreme. Stable is his wisdom who has brought his senses under control”

-Bhagavad Gita Bhasyam- p 81

THE MEANING OF SELF-CONTROL.

(From Self-Knowledge, Introduction, page 38-39)

Self-control is the very core of the Vedantic discipline; without it no progress is possible in spiritual life, or any success in meditation. By means of self-control one empties the mind, as it were, of its worldly contents, its transient desires and passions, and then, through contemplation, fills up the void with the spirit of Truth. The attempt to meditate without practicing self-control is as futile as to irrigate a field without at first closing the big rat-holes through which the water leaks away.

Self-control should be distinguished from the practice of modification and meaningless austerities. It is very different from self-torture, which Sri Krishna condemns in the Bhagavad Gita. Self-control really means the development of will-power and also the strengthening of the buddhi, or the determinative faculty, which controls all the sense organs. This is illustrated in the Katha Upanishad by the parable of the chariot. The body is compared to a chariot inside which is seated the Self, the master. The buddhi is the charioteer, and the mind reins. The senses are the horses, and their objects are the roads along which the vehicle moves.

The chariot serves the purpose of taking to the destination the master, who is the Supreme Self temporarily identified, through ignorance, with the body, the senses, and the mind. If the buddhi (the driver) is weak and the mind (the reins) not held

firmly, then the senses (the horses) become uncontrollable, like the vicious horses of a bad charioteer. But if the buddhi functions properly and the mind is firmly held, then the senses remain under control, like the trained horses of a good charioteer. If a man is devoid of understanding, unmindful, and impure, he never reaches the Goal, but enters into the round of births in the world of ignorance.

But he who is endowed with understanding, purity, and a well controlled mind surely reaches the Goal, from which one does not come back to the world for rebirth. Employing as his charioteer a well developed buddhi which holds firmly the reins of the mind, the embodied Self reaches the end of the journey, which is the supreme state of Godhead.

What is enjoined in this graphic description is not the weakening of the mind and the senses through self –mortification or abstinence from the experience of sense-objects, but the strengthening of the will-power and determinative faculty. In this manner the mind and the senses can be kept under control and prevented from leading the aspirant astray through the enjoyment of objects inimical to his spiritual progress. This strengthening of the will-power and the buddhi is the very core of self-control.

Mantra – Divine Name (Part –I)

(Delivered by Swami Kripamayanda at the Vedanta Society of Toronto)

Mantra is the divine name of the Lord. In fact Mantra – the very word when analyzed means, Manana trayeta iti Mantra. Mantra means that which when repeated with reflection on its meaning gives liberation and saves the seeker. Mantra has the power to give liberation from all suffering, all imperfections, all incompleteness and saves us from all worldliness. Mantra has to be repeated with reflection on its meaning and not mechanically. If I am saying Ram, then I am remembering God Supreme, who is Supreme Brahman – Suddha Brahma paratpara Ram – the Supreme Brahman who took the form of King Ram. If you do not want to have the idea of personal God, you can remember that Ram denotes the same meaning as denoted by the word God or Om or Brahman. But when you repeat you will have to reflect on the meaning of the word that is being repeated. This word given by the Guru can be a phrase or mystic syllable. For example Om – this itself becomes a mantra, a beautiful mantra from the Upanishad. It is said that those who want to reach God, meditate on the mantra. Human beings practice austerities, continence and meditate on the Lord that is Om. The word Om is itself the goal. How can the word be goal or the source? Patanjali in Raja-yoga says that ‘Tasya vachaka pranavaha’. Any name of the God is in itself God. For example if we say ‘John’, immediately the person in our mind comes in front of us. The divine name and the form are not different.

Once Rukmini was weighing Krishna with gold. All the gold in the treasury was put on one scale, but still Krishna weighed more. Everyone was wondering how to balance Krishna. Then Satyabhama commented that all the gold in the world will not be able to balance Krishna. She took a Tulsi (Basil) leaf which is very loved by Krishna and wrote the name

‘Krishna’ and put the leaf on the other scale. Immediately Krishna’s weight got balanced.

On another occasion, a person was coming from Sri Lanka to India and was wondering how to cross the vast ocean. At that time Vibhisan came to that person and tied an object to the corner of his cloth and told him to walk over the ocean. The person started walking on the ocean and when he reached the middle of the ocean, he was wondering about the nature of the object that was tied to his cloth. He opened the knot and saw a piece of paper written ‘Ram’ on it. He doubted the power of this piece of paper. As soon as doubt came to his mind, he was drowned. Doubt on the name of God causes one to drown. Faith in the name of God is the power of mantra.

Prayer in all religions reinstates the glory of the name of Lord. In the Old Testament the glory of the name of the Lord is asserted. In the Eastern orthodox tradition, a mendicant was repeating continuously ‘Lord Jesus Christ – the son of God, have mercy on me’. This itself was his mantra. ‘Hail Mary’ or ‘Our Father in heaven...’ are also some of the mantras. In Buddhism a very common mantra is ‘Om Mani Padme Hum’. The devotees sound the gong and roll the cylinders with this mantra written on them. They believe that the number of times the cylinder rolls around, is the same as the number of times that they have repeated the mantra. But repeating the mantra without thinking on the meaning of the mantra –Om God, Om God, will not give results. Contemplating on the meaning of the mantra gives us great joy. During vigil, people sit in the shrine for one hour or more doing japam and try to do meditation fixing their mind on the meaning of the mantra and this results in great joy.

In Islam the beautiful mantra is 'Bismillah ur rehman ir rahim' – in the name of Allah, the merciful the compassionate. You meet a Muslim; he will utter this mantra and remember Allah. In Hinduism the most sacred, common mantra is 'Om'-the supreme impersonal God, repeated over by almost all people, thousands of years. We say 'Om Kali', 'Om Krishna', 'Om Shiva' – Om is common, Kali, Krishna, Shiva are the forms of the supreme impersonal being – the infinite, supreme Satchidananda. God takes the form of Mother Kali or Krishna or Shiva, that same Brahman takes different form. God is so compassionate that He appears in the form which is loved by the devotee.

To some who do not wish to see God in any form but want to experience the formless one, the same being gives that experience to His beloved devotee. That is the power of Mantra and power of love. Swamiji said that Om is very special mantra –starts with 'A' and ends with 'M' – A-U-M. He said that Om denotes all thoughts that human being can have. Om denotes the highest supreme God. The word starts with A-creation, U-sustenance and M-end. All words are derivations of OM. We cannot think without words, ultimately

thoughts are projected by words. From where does the thought come – it comes from God. So Om represents God. In the Bible also it is said that in the beginning there was word and it was God. In Vedanta, Om is that word – Om is the name of God. First vibration or music of spheres or creation of the world started with Om.

Vedanta says there are few Mahavakyas – 'big sentences'. In size they are small sentences, but in the meaning, they are very big. One of them is 'Aham Brahmasmi' – 'I am Brahman'. I am that supreme reality. Another is 'Prajnanam Brahman' – 'Consciousness is Brahman' – that pure consciousness which pervades everywhere and which manifests in the living beings as life force is Brahman. It is everywhere, manifested in some, and unmanifested in others; it is that supreme blissful consciousness, ever present, ever aware. The third is 'Tat tvam asi' – 'Thou art that'. You are that Self, ever pervading blissful Brahman. The fourth is 'Ayam Atma Brahman' –This Atman is Brahman.....

(To be continued in the next issue...)

VEDANTA SOCIETY OF TORONTO

- 1. The Vedanta Society of Toronto is planning a major expansion to its existing premises in order to accommodate the growing needs of the devotees. Members, devotees and friends are welcome to email their suggestions and valuable input on this project. The email address dedicated for this project: VSTBuildingExpansion@gmail.com**
- 2. Soup Kitchen is looking volunteers for short term for the months of June & July to enable us to continue the soup kitchen in summer. Volunteers are required for 2 hours to prepare soup & salad. Please drop in on Tuesdays at 9:30 am & 10 am on Saturdays.**

KEY ELEMENTS OF RAMAKRISHNA MISSION'S APPROACH TO AND METHODOLOGY OF RELIEF:

- ❑ Worship of God in humans as the guiding ideal.
- ❑ Strictly apolitical conduct of activities and avoidance of populist publicity.
- ❑ Financial accountability through detailed records of the sources and utilization of funds.
- ❑ Reaching out to the most needy through careful field surveys.
- ❑ No discrimination on religious, ethnic, sectional or other grounds.
- ❑ Involvement of local people in planning as well as implementation of specific programmes.
- ❑ Rapid and efficient provision of services and use of current technology wherever feasible.
- ❑ Time-bound programmes and avoidance of 'indiscriminate charity' to prevent wastage of resources and dependence among beneficiaries.
- ❑ Participatory approach involving monks, volunteers and technical experts.
- ❑ Focus on development—socio-economic, environmental and cultural—empowerment, and preventive strategies in rehabilitation.

BELUR MATH NEWS

Storm Relief: In the wake of the recent heavy storm which caused massive devastation in certain parts of Assam, Bihar and West Bengal, two of our centres conducted relief operations in affected areas. Details of the relief materials distributed during this month are given below.

- a) **Assam: Silchar centre** – 522 *saris*, 71 *dhotis*, 62 steel plates, 1089 CGI sheets, 120 CGI *tulis* and 61 kg GI wires to 593 storm-affected families of 2 villages in Tapang block, Cachar district.
- b) **Bihar & West Bengal: Katihar centre** – 27,485 plates of cooked food, 4900 kg rice, 3500 kg flour, 1400 kg *dal* (lentils), 700 kg sugar, 700 kg mustard oil, 700 kg *chhatu*, 424 kg **biscuits**, 150 kg *jalebi*, 2296 *saris*, 1512 *dhotis* and 700 *lungis* to 1805 storm-affected families of 45 villages in Araria and Katihar districts of Bihar, and Raiganj area in Uttar Dinajpur district, West Bengal.

Fire Relief: Orissa: On 16 April, **Puri Mission** centre distributed 26 sets of utensils (each set containing 1 cooking pot, 1 *dekchi*, 1 *khunti*, 1 serving spoon, 2 plates, 2 glasses, 3 bowls, 1 pitcher and 1 bucket), 46 *saris*, 48 *dhotis*, 58 other garments, 96 towels, 26 bed sheets, 26 mosquito-nets and 26 plastic mats to 26 families whose houses had been ravaged by a devastating fire at Rachhipur village of Danagadi block in Jajpur district.

Aila Cyclone Relief: West Bengal: Belgharia centre sunk six tube-wells at Aila-affected areas in Gosaba block, South 24-Parganas district.

Distress Relief: The following centres distributed various items, shown in brackets, to the needy: **Almora** (11,755 kg rice), **Cherrapunji** (143 assorted garments, 275 sets of children's garments and 373 woollen sweaters), **Guwahati** [6 *tatsals* (weaving equipments), 3 sewing machines and 132 books].

Sri Mukul Mudgal, Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Courts, and Sri Shivraj Patil, Governor of Punjab, visited **Chandigarh** centre on 2 and 4 April respectively in connection with the **annual celebrations of the Ashrama.**

Sri M.O.H Farook, Governor of Jharkhand, inaugurated the first floor of **Divyayan Krishi Vigyan Kendra building** housing classrooms and a conference hall at **Ranchi Morabadi Ashrama** on 14 April.

On the occasion of **Purna Kumbha Mela, Kankhal centre** made arrangements for the stay of monks and devotees for the three **Shahi Snans (important baths) on 12 February (Shiva Ratri), 15 March (Somavati Amavasya) and 14 April (Vaishakhi).** A big camp was put up at the Ashrama premises from 10 to 16 April for the **Pramukh Shahi Snan** (the most important bath) on 14 April. In all, nearly **2500 devotees and more than 400 monks were accommodated at the Ashrama premises.** Discourses and cultural programmes were organized from 10 to 16 April and a commemorative volume was released on the 12th.

SUMMARY OF PAST EVENTS

Buddha Purnima was held on Sunday 30th May 2010 at 11:00am. The programme

included bhajans, reading, puja, flower offering and prasad distribution.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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.

Guru Purnima will be held on **Monday 26th July 2010 at 6:30pm.** The

programme will include bhajans, reading, puja, flower offering and prasad distribution.

The **Krishna Janmashtami** will be held on **Wednesday, September 1, 2010 at 6.30 pm.** The programme will consist bhajans, reading, puja and flower offering followed by 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, June 5, 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 June 13, 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 **6 days in June (1, 8, 10, 15, 22 & 29) & 5 days in July (6, 13, 15, 20 & 27)** serving 450 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.

The Forthcoming Seminar

The Annual Seminar on 'Tradition and Innovation' will be held on September 11 from 9am to 4pm. We have a panel of distinguished scholars which includes Rev. Swami Sridharananda, the monk in-charge of the Vedanta Society of Sydney, Australia to address the audience.

Space is limited and will be provided on a first-come first-served basis.

Minister and Teacher - Swami Kripamayanda, Ramakrishna Order of India

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		<u>1</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: 'Vivekachudamani'	<u>5</u> Vigil: 6 am to 6 pm
<u>6</u> 11am Lecture: 'Reflections on Mind' <u>VVM 1:30 pm</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>11</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>12</u> VVM 1:30PM Pradarshanam Rehearsal
<u>13</u> 11:00 am <u>VVM</u> <u>Pradarshanam</u> 5:00PM Ram Nam	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u> 7:30pm NO SCRIPTURE CLASS	<u>19</u> Annual Summer Retreat
<u>20</u> Annual Summer Retreat	<u>21</u> <i>Annual Summer Recess begins</i>	<u>22</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u>
<u>27</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>30</u>			

Summer Recess

The Vedanta Society of Toronto will observe its summer recess this year from June 21 to September 10. The Annual Seminar will be held on September 11, 2010. Regular services will resume after the Seminar. Please note, however, that Guru Purnima will be celebrated during the recess, on Monday, July 26 at 6:30pm and Krishna Janmashtami on Wednesday, September 1 at 6:30pm. Morning and evening prayer and meditation at the Centre will continue throughout the summer. The Newsletter will not be published in July and August.

The Vedanta Society of Toronto wishes everyone a happy and safe summer!