



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 – June 2007

“Weep for God with a longing heart. Tears shed for Him will wash away the clay. When you have thus freed yourself from impurity, you will be attracted by the magnet. Only then will you attain yoga.”

-*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 344

Words to Inspire

(*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* – p. 344)

Sri Ramakrishna: “If a man is able to weep for God, he will see Him. He will go into samadhi. Perfection in Yoga is Samadhi. A man achieves kumbhaka without any yogic exercise if he weeps for God. The next stage is samadhi.

“There is another method – that of meditation. In the Sahasrara, Siva manifests Himself in a special manner. The aspirant should meditate on Him. The body is like a tray; the mind and buddhi are like water. The Sun of Satchidananda is reflected in this water. Meditating on the reflected Sun, one sees Real Sun through the grace of God.

“But the worldly man must constantly live in the company of holy men. It is necessary for all, even for sannyasis. But it is especially necessary for the householder. His disease has become chronic because he has to live constantly in the midst of ‘woman and gold’.”

Mr. Mukherji: “Yes, sir. The disease has indeed become chronic.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Give God the power of attorney. Let him do whatever He wants. Be like a kitten and cry to Him with a fervent heart. The mother cat puts the kitten wherever she wants to. The kitten doesn’t know anything. It is left sometimes on the bed and sometimes near the hearth.”

Mr. Mukherji: “It is good to read sacred books like the *Gita*.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “But what will you gain by mere reading? Some have heard of milk, some have seen it, and there are some, besides, who have drunk it. God can indeed be seen; what is more, one can talk to Him.

“The first stage is that of the beginner. He studies and hears. Second is the stage of the aspirant. He prays to God, meditates on Him, and sings His name and glories. The third stage is that of the perfect soul. He has seen God, realized Him directly and immediately in his inner Consciousness. Last is the stage of the supremely perfect, like Chaitanya. Such a devotee establishes a definite relationship with God, looking on Him as his Son or Beloved.”

M., Rakhil, Jogin, Latu, and the other devotees were entranced by these words of divine realization.

Mr. Mukherji and his friends were taking leave of the Master. After saluting him they stood up. The Master also stood up to show them courtesy.

Mr. Mukherji (smiling): “That you should stand up or sit down!”

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling): “But what’s the harm? Water is water whether it is placid or waves. I am like a cast-off leaf in the wind. The wind blows that leaf wherever it lists. I am the machine and God is its Operator.” □

What is Renunciation? – Part II

*(Based on a talk delivered by Prof. M. Ram Murty
at the Vedanta Society of Toronto on April 22, 2007)*

(Continued from the May Newsletter:)

In Volume 9 of the *Complete Works*, Swami Vivekananda writes, “The first obstruction to our following reason is our unwillingness to go to truth. We want truth to come to us. In all my travels, most people told me: ‘Oh, that is not a comfortable religion you talk about. Give us a comfortable religion!’ I do not understand what they mean by this ‘comfortable religion’. I was never taught any comfortable religion in my life. I want truth for my religion. Whether it be comfortable or not, I do not care. Why should truth be comfortable always? Truth many times hits hard - as we all know by our experience. Gradually, after a long intercourse with such persons, I came to find out what they meant by their stereotypical phrase. These people have got into a rut and they do not dare to get out of it. Truth must apologize to them” (*Complete Works*, Vol. 9, p. 216).

I believe it was Swami Vivekananda, in his youth, who said that if he were the creator of the universe, he would have created a better world, more perfect in order, without tension and trouble. However, later in life, he realized that the universe exists for a singular purpose, and that is to enable everyone to realize their Divine nature and to become one with it. He concluded that if this is its goal, then the universe has been perfectly constructed. Each one of us meets problems that are sympathetic to issues we have to resolve. For the spiritual journey is a journey of the mind. It is not a physical journey. Swami Vivekananda puts it rather humorously: To avoid a problem, you may go to the north pole and feel that you are safe there. The problem will come to you just the same. The polar bear will bring it to you.

Thus, the world is perfect for our spiritual journey so let us stop blaming it for our troubles. Rather use it as a spiritual opportunity. Through reflection, through introspection, our inner eye opens and we become firmly fixed in our goal. We learn through our mistakes. We grow. However, mere knowledge is not enough. Scholarship is good, but if it is not combined with action towards our

spiritual goal, we will be like vultures that soar high, yet whose mind is fixed on the charnel pit below, as Sri Ramakrishna beautifully puts it. We must guard against this danger. If thought corresponds to the steering wheel of the car, action corresponds to the engine. It is the aspect of willing in the human mind.

What you will, that you get. So we must be careful about what we will, and will is directed by our thoughts. If we repeatedly think about something, the will is engaged. We enter into cruise control. The momentum of our past thinking has led us to our present predicament. This gives us consolation, says Swami Vivekananda. In *Raja Yoga*, he writes, “The mind, to have non-attachment, must be clear, good and rational. Why should we practice? Because each action is like the pulsations quivering over the surface of the lake. The vibration dies out, and what is left? The *samskāras*, the impressions. When a large number of these impressions are left on the mind, they coalesce, and become a habit. It is said, ‘Habit is second nature’, it is first nature also, and the whole nature of man; everything that we are is the result of habit. That gives us consolation, because, if it is only habit, we can make and unmake it at any time.... The only remedy for bad habits is counter habits; all the bad habits that have left their impressions are to be controlled by good habits. Go on doing good, thinking holy thoughts continuously; that is the only way to suppress base impressions. Never say anyone is hopeless, because he only represents a character, a bundle of habits, which can be checked by new and better ones. Character is repeated habits, and repeated habits alone can reform character” (Vol. 1, p. 207).

This understanding helps us quite a lot in learning about the mechanics of the mind. It is the essence of how the mind works. Our real essential nature is Pure Awareness. That Pure Awareness percolates through all the accumulated impressions, opinions, prejudices, our likes and dislikes. All of these impressions are like clouds, blotting the light

of Pure Awareness. Just as the sun illumines and animates all life on this planet, but is not responsible for the good or evil that occurs, similarly the Pure Awareness, which is our essential nature, animates all living things. We must remember that we are not the thoughts. Thoughts come and go. Our essential nature is that of Pure Awareness. By turning our mind towards that, we will bathe in the light of Pure Awareness. We will realize our identity with Brahman. “*Śuddha man, śuddha ātman ek,*” as Sri Ramakrishna used to say. The pure mind and the pure atman are one and the same.

But just as the sun radiates light and heat, so also the Pure Awareness radiates consciousness and love. It is indeed loving consciousness. It is the Divine Mother. Who else will put up with all our stupidities and foolishness, if not the pure embodiment of love. And this brings us to the control of our emotions. It is easily done through the practice of *bhakti yoga*.

When M. first met Sri Ramakrishna, he asked him how one can direct the mind towards God. “Repeat God’s name and sing his glories.... The mind cannot dwell on God if it is immersed day and night in worldliness, in worldly duties and responsibilities; it is most necessary to go into solitude, now and then, and think of God” (*Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 81).

The great bhaktas of the past all sang their way into heaven. Kirtan or bhajan is a simple way to repeat the name of God. Music works wonders in taming the mind from its vagaries. The more we engage in devotional music, the better it is for us. In his address on Bhakti Yoga, Swami Vivekananda writes, “The greatest aid to this practice of keeping God in memory is music. Sri Krishna says to Narada, the great teacher of Bhakti, ‘I do not live in heaven, nor do I live in the heart of the Yogi, but where My devotees sing My praise, there am I’. Music has such tremendous power over the human mind; it brings it to concentration in a moment. You will find the dull, ignorant, low, brute-like human beings, who never steady their mind for a moment at other times, when they hear attractive music, immediately become charmed and concentrated. Even the minds of animals, such as dogs, lions, cats and serpents, become charmed with music” (Vol. 4, p. 9). This yoga of music, the yoga of chanting is a significant part of bhakti yoga. Another way to repeat the name

of God is to read about the lives and teachings of the great saints and sages. Fortunately, we can use the printed word to transport our mind and soar into another world on the wings of imagination. This is the meaning of holy company. When we read about these sages, our mind is forming images and therefore thinking of God. Our mood and thought are intertwined. What we think about determines our mood. Thus, if we are not feeling good, we must just make the habit of turning to some spiritual literature of our liking and we find that our mood changes very quickly.

Mahatma Gandhi writes, “When disappointment stares me in the face and all alone I see not one ray of light, I go back to the Bhagavad Gita. I find a verse here and a verse there and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming tragedies - and my life has been full of external tragedies - and if they have left no visible scar on me, I owe it all to the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita” (quoted in the preface of S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavad Gita*).

This is the secret. Whenever the mind is at an emotional low, we must have an exit plan. Let us retreat into solitude and reflect on God. Let us reflect on the lives of the saints and sages of the past. Their lives were full of troubles and yet, they overcame them. Our difficulties are nothing in comparison to what Mahatma Gandhi experienced, or what Swami Vivekananda endured, or what Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother had to go through. This is the value of spiritual reading. Through that reading, our difficulties evaporate. How often we let the barking of puppy dogs disturb our peace of mind. Think of what Gandhi had to go through. Those of you who have studied Gandhi’s *My Experiments with Truth*, know the miracle of spiritual thought. An ordinary person, like you and me, rose to become a spiritual giant. It can be done since others in the past have done it. Our raw emotions can be transmuted by bhakti into spiritual power.

(The concluding portion of this article will appear in the September Newsletter.)



Why We Observe Guru Purnima

In Hinduism, we hold the guru in very high esteem. Many of our sacred scriptures and prayers equate the guru with God Himself. Our traditions hold that, at the very least, the guru serves as a link between the aspirant and the Divine. It is the guru who transmits the sacred mantra and spiritual instruction to the disciple, after careful consideration of the latter's nature and proclivities. Because of this, we regard the guru as the one who 'opens the door' for the aspirant and sets him/her upon the path to God-realization.

Guru Purnima is observed on the full-moon day of the month of Ashad (July-August). This day is associated with the ancient sage Vyasa, who is believed by Hindus to have been the author of many of the most-important scriptures, as well as the teacher of Dattatreya, the 'guru of the gurus'. In India, this time coincides with the onset of the rainy season, when wandering sannyasins traditionally join their spiritual teachers for a four-month period of scriptural study and intensive religious guidance.

In the centres of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, we celebrate Guru Purnima in honour of our supreme guru, Sri Ramakrishna. In this way, we remind ourselves that our individual 'diksha guru' is the channel through which we can bring ourselves closer to the Supreme Reality.



Retreat at Arunachala Ashrama, Nova Scotia

on

MEDITATION & SPIRITUAL LIFE

July 6, 7 & 8, 2007

Swami Kripamayananda will conduct a spiritual retreat at Arunachal Ashrama, Nova Scotia from July 6 to 8. Arunachal Ashrama is situated in a serene, secluded and picturesque site in rural Nova Scotia. The focus of the retreat will be total immersion in Vedantic spirituality.

The registration fee, including reading material and meals, is \$65 per person (\$50 for the second and \$45 for the third person from the same family; \$50 for students). Please note that the number of participants is limited. Cheques are to be made payable to 'Spiritual Retreat'.

The first 20 registrants will receive free accommodation in the Ashrama. For others, hotels are available in the nearby town of Bridgewater.

Further information:

Mr. Maneesh Rampersad, 23 Bayview Road, Halifax, NS, B3M 1N8

Tel.: 902-404-5102, Fax: 902-443-6424; Email: m_rampersad@yahoo.com

BELUR MATH NEWS

The Trustees of Ramakrishna Math, Belur, and the Governing Body of Ramakrishna Mission have appointed **Swami Smaranananda** a **Vice-President**, **Swami Prabhananda** the **General Secretary**, and **Swami Suvirananda** an **Assistant Secretary**. They assumed their respective offices on May 2, the sacred Buddha Purnima day.

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission were conferred the *M. Jalaluddin Rumi International Award for Universal Peace, Tolerance and Harmony, 2006*, at a two-day function at the India Islamic Cultural Centre, New Delhi. The event was organized by the Interfaith Harmony Foundation of India in collaboration

with the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, and inaugurated by Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India, on April 21. On behalf of the Math and Mission, **Swami Gautamananda** received the award, consisting of a citation from Dr. Karan Singh, President, Indian Council for Cultural Relations.

Swami Smaranananda visited China (Beijing, Hangzhou and Shanghai) from April 12 to 22. He gave talks at Beijing University and Zhejiang University and participated in an International Conference at the latter. He also addressed the Indian Embassy staff in Beijing.

Summer Recess

The Vedanta Society of Toronto will observe its regular summer recess this year from June 25 to September 7. The Annual Seminar will be held on September 8. Regular services will resume after the Seminar. Please note, however, that Guru Purnima will be celebrated during the recess, on Monday, July 30. Morning and evening prayer and meditation at the centre will continue throughout the summer. The Newsletter will not be published in July and August. We wish everyone a safe and happy summer.

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 9, 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: On Sunday, June 17 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: This month, the Soup Kitchen will be held on June 14, 21 and 28. 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 collections, as well as other Vedantic materials.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Minister and Teacher - Swami Kripamayanda, Ramakrishna Order of India

JUNE 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					<u>1</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: <i>Tattvabodha</i>	<u>2</u>
<u>3</u> 11 am – <i>Lecture:</i> ‘Charting Our Spiritual Growth’	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: <i>Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna</i>	<u>9</u> Vigil: 6 am to 6 pm
<u>10</u> 11 am – <i>Special Program:</i> Vedanta Vidya Mandir Pradarshanam	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u> 9 am Soup Kitchen	<u>15</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: <i>Tattvabodha</i>	<u>16</u>
<u>17</u> 11am – <i>Guest Lecture:</i> ‘Managing Uncertainty’ by Manoranjan Murty, MD Ram Nam: 5pm	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>21</u> 9 am Soup Kitchen	<u>22</u> 7:30pm (No scripture class)	<u>23</u> <u>Summer Retreat</u> 6am – 9pm
<u>24</u> <u>Summer Retreat</u> 6am – 5pm	<u>25</u> <i>Summer Recess Begins</i>	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u> 9 am Soup Kitchen	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>

Guru Purnima Celebration

We will celebrate Guru Purnima on Monday, July 30th at 6:30 pm. There will be worship, meditation, devotional songs, flower offerings by the devotees, and prasad distribution.

SUMMER RETREAT with Swami Atmarupanandaji

June 23: 6 am to 9 pm; June 24: 6 am to 5 pm

**There is a registration fee of \$75 per person for this two-day program.
If you wish to participate, please submit the attached form to the Vedanta Society by mail, fax, or in person.**

2007 Annual Summer Retreat
Registration Form

This year, the Vedanta Society will hold its Annual Summer Retreat on **Saturday, June 23 - Sunday, June 24**. The Retreat will be conducted by Swami Atmarupananda, of the Vedanta Society of Hollywood, and Swami Kripamayananda, Minister-in-charge of the Vedanta Society of Toronto. The program will take place at the Vedanta Society, 120 Emmett Avenue, Toronto.

The theme of this year's Retreat is the *Kena Upanishad*. The Retreat will be organized so as to encourage the active participation of all attendees, and to help them move forward in their spiritual life by discussing ideas and practices that will be of lasting value.

The program begins with morning meditation at 6 am on both Saturday and Sunday. Saturday's program will conclude at 9 pm, and Sunday's program will finish at 5 pm. The two days will be spent in discussing spiritual ideas and selected passages of practical importance from familiar scriptural texts, along with chanting and devotional singing.

The registration fee this year is as follows: \$75.00 for both days; \$50.00 for the first day (Saturday) only; and \$35.00 for the second day (Sunday) only. The fee for each day includes breakfast, morning tea, lunch, evening tea, and dinner (Saturday only). A caterer will provide lunch and dinner. All menu items will be vegetarian.

Participants from outside Metro Toronto requiring accommodation will be directed to a nearby hotel. Transportation to and from the hotel will be provided to those who require it, provided they inform the society in advance.

Please fill out the following form and mail it with your remittance to "Retreat 2007," Vedanta Society of Toronto, 120 Emmett Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M6M 2E6.

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ email: _____

Number of Participants:

Day 1 June 23, 2007 (Saturday) _____ x \$50.00 = \$ _____

Or

Day 2 June 24, 2007 (Sunday) _____ x \$35.00 = \$ _____

Or

Both days (June 23 & June 24) _____ x \$75.00 = \$ _____

Total Cost _____ = \$ _____

Attached is a cheque/Money Order for \$ _____ made out to the "Vedanta Society of Toronto" towards the full amount of the Annual Retreat 2007.

Signature _____

Please return the above form no later than June 15, 2007. Capacity is limited and all forms will be processed on first-come / first-serve basis.

If you have any questions regarding your registration or for any other information, please contact the Society at 416-240-7262.