



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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Newsletter - March 2008

Words to Inspire

**Antas-tyago bahis-tyago viraktasyaiva yujyate;
Tyajatya'ntar bahih-sangam viraktas tu mumuksaya.**

This giving up of the external and internal is possible for him alone who has been freed from all attachments. How? External giving up is achieved by giving up the gross things, and internal renunciation by giving up the ego.

-Vivekacudamani, verse 372

“Brahmacharya”

(Swami Brahmananda, *The Eternal Companion*, p. 205-6)

What then is real Tapasya?

Real Tapasya is not in such feats [of severe austerity]. Anyone can do these things by practice. It is very easy to conquer the body, but to conquer the mind – to conquer lust, greed and the desire for name and fame – is very difficult. Real Tapasya lies in three things:

1. You must be truthful. Truth is the pillar to which you must always hold. Every inch of you must be truthful.
2. You must get rid of lust.
3. You must gain control over the Vasanas [desires].

These are the main things to be observed. Real Tapasya lies in the practice of these three. Of these, the second, that is, Brahmacharya, is the most important and the most difficult. Our scriptures say that by observing Brahmacharya in thought, word and deed for twelve years very strictly, it becomes easy to realize God. I can tell you from my own experience, I have learnt that

no true meditation is possible without real Brahmacharya. It is very difficult to get control over the subtle Vasanas. So the rules for sannyasins are very strict.

The sannyasin should not even look at women. By seeing one, even in a photograph, an impression is formed in the mind. When we see anything attractive to the senses, our natural instinct is to enjoy it. So we unconsciously enjoy in our mind. This is very injurious. If a sadhu sees a woman in a dream, he has to make Prayaschitta. He has to take little food next day or no food at all and he has to make penance by making Japa thousands of times.

Without Brahmacharya the mind will not gain the power to meditate. The mind will be thinking of this or that, and will not think of God. You will not be able to visualize His form. When you practice Brahmacharya, you will see His glory in everything. Everything will look fresh to you. By observing Brahmacharya the power of Ojas is increased in you.

What is True Knowledge? - The Vedantic Approach

[Based on the talk delivered at the Vedanta Society of Toronto on February 10, 2008 by Dr. Narendra Bakhshi, Prof. Emeritus, University of Saskatchewan, Canada]

Here I want to discuss what is meant by True Knowledge or Right Knowledge. There is a great deal of guidance available in the Gita on this subject.

After that, we will discuss briefly how to develop this 'True Knowledge or Right Knowledge' in ourselves. What simple steps can we take, which will allow us to lead a joyful, harmonious and fulfilled life; and ultimately also will take us to realize the *summum-bonum* of life – Self Realization or Moksha.

Webster's dictionary defines knowledge as: 'To have a clear perception or understanding of all that has been perceived and grasped by the MIND or acquaintance with facts, range of information, awareness and understanding.'

Some observations:

Over the last few decades, our knowledge in various fields, such as agriculture, nutrition, medicine, technology, pharmacology and other areas has increased tremendously.

Machines have reduced our drudgery. They have given us more time to follow other interesting and challenging pursuits.

We have the Internet, Google, cell phones etc. to help us in the various ways of our life.

We have explored space, walked on the moon and are getting ready to go to Mars.

This is progress. Knowledge is power. Things our forefathers could only dream of, we have achieved.

On the other hand, we also observe some disturbing trends. Recently (in the *Globe and Mail* of Feb 21st 2007), there was a report from the internationally respected, 'Vanier Institute of the Family' in Montreal, by Professor Emeritus Anne-Marie Ambert, stating that:

"There has been a dramatic increase of children and teenagers with behavioral problems in Canada in the past 30 years. They act intentionally to hurt others, such as being disruptive, aggressive and delinquent."

Another news item along similar lines was from the *National Post* (March 5th – 10th, 2007). It reported on a new type of gang activity in one of the major cities in California.

"A gang made up of the latch-key children of the affluent suburbia – who have formed a gang named 'Public Enemy Number One' . . . the gang has been active in the usual gang-related activities."

This gang is not made up of poor, unprivileged youths; but young persons from affluent households. However, the attitudes of these youths have been destructive.

Thus we see that something is not right. Something does not add up. Knowledge is power, we are told. With more knowledge – in every field and area of our life – we should have fewer problems. Life should be rich and more meaningful. Something is missing. What is that?

Let us visit the definition of knowledge. It says: Understanding of all that has been perceived by mind, grasped by mind, etc.

Now, the quality of the mind is different for different people. How we use a given knowledge will depend on what sort, type or quality of a mind I possess. What is its *quality*?

That is important as this 'quality' will determine how I use the knowledge I possess.

The next question that arises is, then: "What determines the quality of our minds? And where do i get it? How do i develop it?"

Thus, it seems we are looking at two areas or two fields or two domains or two aspects of knowledge:

The first type or domain of knowledge is whatever the mind grasps or understands through our senses. For example, with the knowledge of metallurgy, woodworking, craftsmanship and design; I manufacture a knife which is sharp, stays sharp, and does not rust. Furthermore, I can make this knife in many shapes and sizes, to suit the purpose of use.

All this depends on the quantity of knowledge. For the time being, I will call it 'objective knowledge' or the knowledge of the objective world or the knowledge of the 'observed phenomena'

Secondly, the other domain of knowledge is what determines the quality of our minds, its thoughts, feelings, etc. Taking the previous example, this knowledge will determine how I use that knife.

In the hands of a surgeon, it can be used to heal a person and in the hands of another person, it can be used to hurt or kill somebody. For this discrimination towards decision making, I need another type of knowledge – the knowledge of the 'subject' – the knowledge of 'I' – the knowledge of my *real nature*.

For the time being we shall call this knowledge the knowledge of the subject or the knowledge of the observer.

In Vedanta, various names have been given for these two.

The first, the knowledge of the observed phenomena is called *Aparavidya* or the knowledge of the *Kshetra*.

The second, the knowledge of the subject or the observer, is called *Paravidya*, or the knowledge of *Kshetrajna*.

The next Question is: What, then, is knowledge?

The Gita-Acharya, Bhagvan Krishna, answers us in the Gita (XIII:2) "Know Me as the *Kshetrajna* in all *Kshetra*, O Bharata. The knowledge of *Kshetra* and *Kshetrajna* is deemed by Me to be True Knowledge."

Thus, 'True Knowledge' or Complete Knowledge or Right Knowledge is the knowledge of both the observed and the observer; *Aparavidya* and *Paravidya*.

The knowledge of one of these alone is not sufficient to live a happy, fulfilled, harmonious and peaceful life. Not only for oneself, but all around.

The sage of the *Isavasya Upanishad* has warned us:

"They enter into blinding darkness who worship *Avidya* (knowledge of the observed Phenomena, or *Aparavidya*); Into still greater darkness, as it were, do they enter who delight only in *Vidya* (*Paravidya*)."

German philosopher Schopenhauer, in his book, 'The World as Will and Idea' (as quoted by Swami Ranganathananda in his 'Commentary on the Gita', p. 27), told us about 130 years ago: "When men achieve security and welfare now that they have solved all other problems, they become a problem to themselves."

Swami Ranganathananda further says, "The whole of the modern Western civilization today is in trouble because there is no emphasis on *nivritti* (knowledge of the Self – *Paravidya*), there is emphasis only on *pravritti* (outward action, knowledge of the observed phenomena). Work, work and work; earn more and more money, but remain inwardly poorer and poorer, until one becomes a nervous wreck. Many people are suffering thus, in the modern world."

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, in his book, 'Hindu View of Life', also says the same thing: "The present crisis in human affairs is due to a profound crisis in human consciousness, a lapse from the organic wholeness of life. There is a tendency to overlook the spiritual and exalt the intellectual."

Quantum Leap

Control of Anger

A story told by Anisha Jahagirdar, age 9, in a Vedanta Vidya Mandir Class

Once upon a time there was a man and a woman. They wanted a companion for their baby and a got a mongoose. The mongoose and the baby spent time together and grew used to each other's company.

One day when the man went to his farm to work and the woman went to get water from a well, the baby and the mongoose were left together.

When the mother came home she saw the mongoose with his mouth full of blood. She screamed and thought that the mongoose had killed her baby.

She threw a pot at the mongoose. She rushed into the house and saw a dead snake on the floor and her baby alive.

She was sorry that she killed the mongoose when she realized that the mongoose had fought with snake to protect her baby. **-Anisha. J .**

Reflection on the story by Srijut Sarkar, age 8

I think the moral of the story is: do not be too mad and don't be too sad, stay in balance. When you're angry you could do something that would calm you. In the story, if the farmer's wife had stayed calm she wouldn't have killed the mongoose. The mongoose was actually just protecting the baby.

Reflection on the story by Siddhartha Datta, age 9

When you're angry you can read a good book, do something you really like, talk to someone, say a prayer, or meditate. You could think before you act.

BELUR MATH NEWS

The **Birth Anniversary (Tithi-Puja)** of **Swami Vivekananda** was celebrated at Belur Math on Tuesday, 29 January. Thousands of devotees attended the celebration throughout the day. Cooked prasada was served to about 15,000 devotees. Swami Smarananandaji, Vice-President of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, presided over the public meeting held in the afternoon.

The Headquarters and the other centres in India celebrated the **National Youth Day on 12 January 2008**.

Swami Atmasthanandaji, President, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, unveiled the newly installed 12½-foot bronze statue of Swami Vivekananda at **Swamiji's Ancestral House**, Kolkata, on 1st January.

A **homoeopathic dispensary** was inaugurated at **Palai** centre on 30 December, the sacred birthday of Holy Mother.

Vrindaban Sevashrama organized a function from 11 to 14 January to mark the concluding phase of its centenary celebrations. Swami Atmasthanandaji, President, Ramakrishna Math &

Ramakrishna Mission, unveiled the newly installed statue of Swami Vivekananda at the Sevashrama on 12 January. A special postal cover brought out by the Department of Posts, Government of India, was released.

Viveknagar centre organized two All-Tripura devotees' conferences at the Ashrama on 20 December and 27 January, which were attended by 558 and 393 delegates respectively.

Three students of **Narendrapur** College, namely Soumya Subhra Bhadury, Sandipan Chakraborty and Upamanyu Sengupta, won the first, fourth and fifth prizes respectively in the All-India Elocution Competition on Swami Vivekananda held at the Institute of Culture, Gol Park, in December 2007.

Five students of our **Aalo** (Along) school, namely Nyato Doji, Tania Uli, Nanjal Dulom, Kembi Basar and Baanu Loya, were awarded a gold medal each for their case studies on a Biodiversity project presented in the 15th National Science Congress held at Bharatiya Vidya Pratishthan, Pune, from 27 to 31 December 2007.

SUMMARY OF PAST EVENTS

Public Celebration for the Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda was arranged on **3rd Feb 2008**. The programme

consisted of bhajans, a discourse, havan, and flower offering, followed by prasad distribution. About 135 devotees attended.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Ramnavami will be celebrated on Monday, April 14, 2008 at 6:30pm. The

programme will include Ram-Nam, bhajans, puja, flower offering, and 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, March 8**, 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, March 16 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 served three days (2nd and 3rd Thursdays and 4th Tuesday) a month at Roncesvalles Food Sharing, 263 Roncesvalles Avenue, Toronto M6R 2L9. This month, the Soup Kitchen dates are February 14, February 21 and February 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 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 Kripamayananda, Ramakrishna Order of India

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MARCH 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						<u>1</u>
<u>2</u> 11am-Lecture: Sri Ramakrishna and Lord Shiva VVM: 1-30 pm	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u> 6:30pm SHIVA RATRI Celebration	<u>7</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna	<u>8</u> Vigil: 6 am to 6 pm
<u>9</u> 11am:Public Celebration Sri Ramakrishna Birthday	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen (Swami K. leaves for Calgary)	<u>14</u> No SCRIPTURE CLASS	<u>15</u> (Swami K. returns from Calgary)
<u>16</u> 11am-Lecture: Why we worship Sri Ramakrishna VVM: 1-30 pm RamNam : 5pm	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>20</u> 9.30am Soup Kitchen	<u>21</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna	<u>22</u>
<u>23</u> 11am- Lecture: Reaching the Core	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u> 9.30am Soup Kitchen	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: Tattvabodha	<u>29</u>
<u>30</u> 11am Lecture & Guided Meditation: The Necessity of Breathing VVM: 1-30 pm						

“The goal of human life is the realization of the Ultimate Reality which alone can give man supreme fulfillment and everlasting peace. This is the essence of all religions.”

- Sri Ramakrishna