



Newsletter May 2006

'Unless the mind becomes steady there cannot be yoga. It is the wind of worldliness that always disturbs the mind, which may be likened to a candle-flame. If that flame doesn't move at all, then one is said to have attained yoga.' - Sri Ramakrishna

'The jasmine creeper casts off its withered flowers. Exactly in the same manner, O monks, cast off your passion and ill-will.' - Lord Buddha

Words To Inspire

The main purpose of the Buddha system of mind-training is to purify the mind from all defilements and corruptions in order to cultivate its intrinsic pliability so that perfect knowledge may be attained, which is the means of transcending the states of woe and sorrow.

Furthermore, the mental training specified in Buddhism is training in higher thought, in lofty ideals and concentration of the mind upon some principle of a moral and virtuous character. The mind which is wholly given to a single perception of a salutary kind, becomes purely radiant and illuminate in its original state.

In the very beginning, therefore, it is essential to focus the attention upon an object entirely dissociated from the passions, in order to draw a pure mental picture. The picture the meditator retains is his ideal, and trains his mind to concentrate upon it. The mind becomes pure or impure, not through its own nature, but through the arising of pure and impure thoughts. The object for securing the preliminary attention must, therefore, be associated with purity, virtue, and truth. Moreover, the object or the ideal selected for meditation must be such as to produce some psychological effect which is suited to the particular disposition of the meditator.

The scriptures record that the Buddha realized the diverse mental dispositions and innate tendencies of those who looked to him for deliverance, and recommended them various methods; and these methods have been ever increasingly developed as it became necessary to extend the opportunity of training in this system to a greater variety of mental types.

- Ven. Weragoda Sarada Maha Thera

God's Eternal Presence

(Based on a talk given by Swami Kripamayanda at the Vedanta Society of Toronto on April 16th, 2006)

What is presence? We can say, Presence is the perception of company. You are with others. You spend time with others. You share space with others. You are interacting with a being through time, space and thought. Presence is also a kind of communication. We are all physically here, this morning, at the Vedanta Society of Toronto. I am here, and you are here. Our bodies are here. But, are we really here? Are our minds here? Well, I really hope so. Sometimes I'm sure we have come across moments when you are talking to someone but you know their mind is somewhere else. Are they present with you at that moment? So presence has a physical component and a mental component. Life communicates. Life responds to other signs of life. Consciousness responds in a deep way to consciousness. Why? Because we want to unite ourselves with that which is our own. When you make someone your own, that relationship takes on a very special character. Personal boundaries are discarded - feelings flow; trust blossoms; and love abounds. This striving for reunion is what compels us towards the spiritual path. From one point of view, spiritual life is about reunion. It is about going home to our Mother and Father. It is about reuniting with loved ones - ones whom we love in and through eternity. No longer will there be any feeling of separation, any loneliness, any emptiness. God is always here. Let us see how the the perception of presence and absence affects our understanding.

Did God create everything that exists? Does evil exist? Did God create evil? A University professor at a well known institution of higher learning challenged his students with this question. "Did God create everything that exists?" A student bravely replied, "Yes he did!" "God created everything?" The professor asked. "Yes sir, he certainly did," the student replied. The professor answered, "If God created everything; then God created evil. And, since evil exists, and according to the principal that our works define who we are, then we can assume God is evil." The student became quiet and did not respond to the professor's hypothetical definition. The professor, quite pleased with himself, boasted to the students that he had proven once more that the Christian faith was a myth. Another student raised his hand and said, "May I ask you a question, professor?" "Of course", replied the professor. The student stood up and asked, "Professor, does cold exist?" "What kind of question is this? Of course it exists. Have you never been cold?" The other students snickered at the young man's question. The young man replied, "In fact sir, cold does not exist. According to the laws of physics, what we consider cold is in reality the absence of heat. Every body or object is susceptible to study when it has or transmits energy, and heat is what makes a

body or matter have or transmit energy. Absolute zero (460F) is the total absence of heat; and all matter becomes inert and incapable of reaction at that temperature. Cold does not exist. We have created this word to describe how we feel if we have no heat."

The student continued, "Professor, does darkness exist?"

The professor responded, "Of course it does."

The student replied, "Once again you are wrong sir, darkness does not exist either. Darkness, in reality, is the absence of light. Light we can study, but not darkness. In fact, we can use Newton's prism to break white light into many colors and study the various wavelengths of each color. You cannot measure darkness. A simple ray of light can break into a world of darkness and illuminate it.

How can you know how dark a certain space is? You measure the amount of light present. Isn't this correct? Darkness is a term used by man to describe what happens when there is no light present."

Finally the young man asked the professor, "Sir, does evil exist?"

Now uncertain, the professor responded, "Of course, as I have already said. We see it everyday. It is in the daily examples of man's inhumanity to man. It is in the multitude of crime and violence everywhere in the world. These manifestations are nothing else but evil." To this the student replied, "Evil does not exist, sir, or at least it does not exist unto itself. Evil is simply the absence of God. It is just like darkness and cold, a word that man has created to describe the absence of God.

God did not create evil. Evil is the result of what happens when man does not have God's love present in his heart. It's like the cold that comes when there is no heat, or the darkness that comes when there is no light."

The professor sat down.

In this his way, our perception of what is or isn't present has to be fine-tuned in a way that helps us to feel god's presence. Language plays a critical role in how we navigate through negative thoughts and remain positive. We must think and try hard to remove the negative thoughts which block out thoughts that helps us to feel God's presence.

If we take seriously that God, the Creator is here right now, that He is our father or mother-- the best father or mother we can ever have and more -- who wishes to give us everything that we need for our spiritual growth, how should we feel?

These are some possible feelings:

- Safe.
- Protected.
- Harmonious.
- Loved.
- Happy.
- Able to do anything.

How do we actually feel when we think about the existence of the Creator? Sit back for a moment, relax and think about He who created us, being right here, right now.

You may be wondering, what am I supposed to see when I think about God? The answer is "nothing." On one hand, it is impossible to see the Creator, and on the other hand, everything that exists is a manifestation of Him. What we can focus on, however, is the fact of His presence here and now.

When you meet someone you love and haven't seen for a long time, you rush to embrace him or her. You close your eyes and take time to enjoy being with the person. You don't need to look at them at that moment; you just want to feel their presence. The same goes with our Creator. We do not have to create His image in our minds; we can focus simply on the fact that He is presently here. Imagination is vital to achieve strength in spiritual life. We must use the visual faculty in such a way that our inner eye, the mind's eye, is always set on God, whether it be His form, or His manifestation as all the things inside of us and outside of us.

Concluding Points

Spiritual life is about reunion of the soul to its real home: when Swami Vivekananda sang '*Mono cholo ni jo nicketane*' to Thakur when they first met. Two old friends through the ages met each other again and Thakur was so happy!

- 1) Presence is dynamic, not static: we can feel the presence of god everywhere we go - we take God with us, when we recollect him.
- 2) Presence is reception and transmission: a holy person, just by his presence, can lift the hearts and minds of people that are in his presence. Swami Brahmananda said: "As long as I lived with the Master I had spontaneous recollection and contemplation of God. An ecstatic joy filled me all the time. What we now cannot experience by meditation, we then attained automatically".
- 3) Feeling God's presence is an exercise of faith: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed". From the bible: faith in Jesus as Lord, through his resurrection. Swami Premananda would praise the junior monks, that they had given their lives to Sri Ramakrishna without even seeing him!
- 4) Presence is a practice: presence of God is something we can control, since it is a matter of perception - because we have been given the power to choose what can enter into minds. Brother Lawrence practiced the presence of God in a constant and attentive way. Remember God. Think of Him. He is always there with you.

Belur Math News

Revered President Maharaj dedicated the newly built Sri Ramakrishna Temple, with a marble image of Sri Ramakrishna, at Nagpur Math on February 10th. In all, 381 monastics and about 9000 devotees attended the week-long function organized on this occasion. A parliament of religions and cultural programmes were held.

The birthday of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated at Belur Math on March 1st. Cooked prasad was served to about 24,000 devotees. The public celebration held on March 5th, drew more than 100,000 visitors who thronged the premises throughout the day. Cooked prasad was served to about 32,500 persons on that occasion. .

QUANTUM LEAP

The Life of Sri Ramakrishna

The life of Shri Ramakrishna is an extraordinary phenomenon and each one of us should consider ourselves lucky to feel it and experience it. The gospel of Shri Ramakrishna written by Mahenranath Gupta paints a detailed picture about the day-to-day events that occurred in his lifetime in the golden words as uttered by Shri Ramakrishna. Shri Ramakrishna was born on 18th February 1836 in a small village known as Kamarpukur. His parents belonged to a pious and orthodox Brahmin family. He showed more interest in learning devotional music and performing religious dramas. Shri Ramakrishna was a very cheerful kid with keen interest in nature and showed no interest in other worldly matters.

After his fathers demise he came to Dakshineswar in Calcutta to help his brother with his priestly duties. His priestly duties made him closer to God. His mind was always longing to see and feel God. Shri Ramakrishna was living in his own world thinking, feeling and acting towards the realization of God. After his endless efforts he could feel the divine presence of Mother Kali around him all the time. She became much more real to him than anything else. He could see Her and communicate with Her. His married life with Sri Sarada Ma leaves us with wonderment. He could worship her as the Mother Goddess.

As Mahatma Gandhi rightly stated, "The life of Shri Ramakrishna is a life of religion in practice. His life enables us to see God face to face." All his disciples too, lived great lives; being only possible due to the presence of Shri Ramakrishna. Shri Ramakrishna could only say things after experiencing it personally. Once a mother requested him to advise her son from eating a lot of sugar. Shri Ramakrishna took 10 days to advice the boy after he himself had stopped eating sugar. Same thing was also extended to religion.

He lived as a devoted Christian, devoted Muslim before conveying that all the religions lead to the same goal and reach the same God. He once mended a broken idol of the Lord Krishna in Dakshineswar and went against a group of learned pundits who wanted to immerse the idol in Ganges. The same idol still

stands tall in Dakshineswar. We are all gathered here because of his divine presence in our lives. Let us all pray to him and always have his blessings in all our actions in our lifetime.

- By Guru Iyer, Age 9, *Student of Vedanta Vidya Mandir*

Upcoming Events

Annual Retreat Summer 2006 *Narada Bhakti Sutras*, June 24th -25th

The Event will be conducted in the august presence of:

Swami Aksharananda, Head of Ramakrishna Mission Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Swami Krishnarupananda, Head of Ramakrishna Mission, Vacoas,

Mauritius. *Registration is required. Please contact the Centre for more information.*

Regular Services

Daily Meditation

Meditation is held at the Centre every morning from 6 am to 7 am. Devotional singing and meditation is held every evening from 6 pm to 7 pm.

Interviews and Instruction

Swami Kripamayananda grants interviews to those interested in knowing more about Vedanta, Indian Philosophy, and spirituality and its practices. Please call in advance and make an appointment.

Sunday Service

Lectures are given every Sunday at 11 am by Swami Kripamayananda or distinguished speakers. The service includes devotional singing, reading, meditation and refreshments. **Please use front entrance.**

Scripture Class

Scripture classes are held every Friday at 7:30 pm. **Please use upstairs kitchen entrance.**

Vedanta Vidya Mandir

An educational programme for young people ages 4 - 17, teaching Indian Spirituality, History, Values, Sanskrit, Music and Yoga - is usually held twice a month. **Classes are from 1 pm to 4 pm.**

Bookstore

The Bookstore carries selected titles from Ramakrishna - Vivekananda literature, as well as other material related to Vedanta and Indian Philosophy. Please call for store hours.

Calendar of Events

Minister and Teacher: Swami Kripamayananda, Ramakrishna Order of India

May 2006

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u> Scripture Class: <i>Life of Sri Shankaracharya</i> 7:30 pm	<u>6</u>
<u>7</u> Lecture: Buddha's Path 11 am Vedanta Vidya Mandir 1 pm	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u> Scripture Class: <i>The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna</i> 7:30 pm	<u>13</u> Public Celebration: Buddha Jayanti 11 am
No Lecture: <u>14</u> Guided Meditation 11 am Ram Nam 5 pm	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u> Scripture Class: <i>Tattva Bodha</i> 7:30 pm	<u>20</u> Vigil 6 am - 6 pm
<u>21</u> Lecture: Religion and Life 11 am Vedanta Vidya Mandir 1 pm	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u> Scripture Class: <i>The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna</i> 7:30 pm	<u>27</u> Soup Kitchen 9:30 am
<u>28</u> Guest Lecture: Spiritual Development of Our Future Generation 11 am	May 28th Guest Speaker: Hari Nam Singh Khalsa <i>Director,</i> Healing Arts Centre of Oakville		<u>31</u>	May 13th, 11 am Buddha Jayanti <i>A special programme of puja, devotional singing, reading, meditation and prasad.</i>		

There are only two mistakes one can make along the road to truth;

not going all the way, and not starting.

- Lord Buddha