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Newsletter October 2005

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"If God is Omnipresent, why do we not see Him? Standing by the bank of a pool thickly overspread with scum and weeds, you will say that there is no water in it. If you desire to see the water, remove the scum from the surface of the pool. With eyes covered with the film of Maya you complain that you cannot see God. If you wish to see Him, remove the film of Maya from your eyes."

-Sri Ramakrishna

Words To Inspire

After dinner the devotees sat around the Master. Kedar said to him with folded hands, "Please forgive me for hesitating to eat here." Perhaps the thought had come to his mind that he should not have hesitated, since the Master himself had no scruples about eating at Adhar's house.

Kedar worked in Dacca. Many devotees brought offerings of sweets and other food for him. Referring to this, Kedar said to the Master: "People want to give me food. What should I do? Lord, what is your command in this matter?"

Master: "One can eat food even from an untouchable if the untouchable is a devotee of God. After spending seven years in a God-intoxicated state at Dakshineswar, I visited Kamarpukur. Oh, what a state of mind I was in at that time. Even a prostitute fed me with her own hands. But I cannot allow that now." Kedar was about to take his leave.

Kedar: "Lord, please transmit power to me. Many people come to me. What do I know?"

Master: "Everything will be all right. One gets along well if one is sincerely devoted to God."

Master: "God has form; again, He is formless. How many aspects He has! We cannot comprehend Him. Why should we say that God is formless only?"

Vijay: "As he says, the chameleon assumes different colours - now this colour, now that. Only the man who lives under the tree knows the animal's true colour."

Kedar: "God assumes forms for the sake of His devotees. Through ecstatic love a devotee sees God with form. Dhruva had a vision of the Lord. He said: 'Why dont Your earnings move?' The Lord said, 'They will move if you move them.'"

Master: "One must accept everything: God with form and God without form. While meditating in the Kali temple I noticed Ramani, a prostitute. I said, 'Mother, I see that Thou art in that form too.' Therefore I say one must accept everything. One does not know when or how God will reveal Himself."

-Sri Ramakrishna, from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*

Mundaka Upanishad: The Basis of Knowledge

(Based on a talk delivered by Swami Dayatmananda, Head of Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Bourne End, UK on June 19th, 2005 at the Vedanta Society of Toronto.)

We are supposed to finish the whole Upanishad in this afternoon session, and that's not difficult. To begin is difficult, to continue is difficult, but to finish is very easy. Previously, I had discussed what philosophy is. Philosophy means to find out who we are, what this world is and who God is. And also, what the relationship is between us, God and the world.

So, the Upanishad gives us truth about God - there is only one reality. How do we know that there is only one reality? Reason can take us some distance to prove there is only one reality. To give an example - suppose there are different objects made out of wood - a table, a bench, and a chair. When you look at them you do not say the table is the chair, the bench is the table. Each object is totally separate from the other. What is it that creates the separation? All are made out of only one material: wood. But what creates the difference between the different objects? The name, the form and the qualities. Suppose you break the table, bench and chair. All those things lose their specific forms. Along with the form, the name also disappears. And when the form and the name disappear, what do you call that 'lump' of all that remains? What is that? It is all wood.

The search has been from the scientific point of view. Scientists are also in search of truth. What truth are they looking for? What is the basic material out of which the world and the universe are made of? Scientists have named it matter. And then they want to know whether matter can also be further traced to some other origin. Then they find out something very interesting. Matter and energy are interchangeable. What do they mean by 'interchangeable'? Not that one actually changes into the other, but it is two ways of looking at one and the same thing. If you look from one point of view, it appears as matter. If you look at it from another point of view, it appears as energy. The scientists cannot go beyond this point because the sense organs do not have the capacity to perceive further. Senses do not have the capacity. If one wants to go beyond, then one has to have some other instrument. What is the instrument? It is the mind. Everything is, as it were, made up of thought. Some scientists have expressed the whole world as being nothing but thought in action. Vedanta gives an example: a dream. When you are dreaming, what are you dreaming about? The dream is a collection of your thoughts, appearing as different objects, with different forms, different names, different qualities, as though it were very real. During the dream, we never think, 'Oh, this is nothing but some fancy thoughts running around'. We take it to be as real as the waking state. But even the mind is an instrument limited in its capacity. An instrument is separate from the object. Therefore it limits the knowledge. One must go beyond the mind.

So, what is it that is beyond the mind? It is 'consciousness'. Now let us analyse this, from our personal point of view. You ask me who I am. I say I am Swami Dayatmananda. You say, 'What do you mean by Swami Dayatmananda?' Well, you see I am a male, I am of a brownish colour, I am of such and such height. This is the description of the physical body. Is that all there is to Swami Dayatmananda? No. He is also a good singer - he has the quality of being able to sing. Sometimes he has the quality of sneezing also. So certain qualities which belong to the mind are called concepts. Human beings always have certain things which we can say through perception - through percepts. Concepts like love, hatred, service, friendship, devotion cannot be seen because they are not objects. They are emotions; they are qualities belonging to the mind. But, nonetheless, they can be verified through expressions. If I am angry, you will be able to find out. If I am serving you, you will be able to know this. When you go to a restaurant, you get served. But when a mother serves food it may not be as tasty as the restaurant food. But the value of food appreciates and is appreciated when it comes through the hands of a mother. But you see, when it comes to our body, we ask, 'Swami, how are you?' I say my head is aching. 'Oh, Swami Dayatmananda is suffering from a headache!' Now, it is Swami Dayatmananda's head that is aching - not Swami Dayatmananda. But we forget this distinction, because our identity is so much with this body. And not only with this body, but we also identify very much with anything that belongs to us. This 'I' has become extended.

There is a saying, 'You love me, you love my dog.' A gentleman wanted a wife. So he placed an ad - 'Wife wanted, must have car.' So, a woman responded, 'I also need a husband, and I have a car.' Immediately the gentleman sent back the message, 'Send photograph of the car.' See how much we are identified with what we call 'mind'. Let somebody scratch your car, you yourself feel scratched.

We are identified with other things to such a degree! Parents, who are illiterate, become identified with their children - 'Our son is a doctor!', 'Our son is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order!' Parents derive more pride out of this identification. But you must remember, whatever you call 'mine' is not real. This body is not reality; mind is not reality; intellect is not reality. If we go on saying 'not this, not this', then what remains? The 'I' remains. And this 'I' is called Pure Consciousness - Atman. Atman is that which remains after denying all that we call 'mine' - body, mind, intellect, etc. This 'I' does not have any distinction. So, if you deny all the things you call 'yours', then what is the difference between 'me', 'you' and anybody else? It is like water getting mixed with water. There is no more need for distinguishing between what has name, form and qualities. If body, mind and intellect are gone, consciousness remains. There is nothing else. It is one indistinguishable, indivisible reality that remains.

Another factor is, consciousness cannot be denied. Deep thought is necessary to understand this truth because in order for us to agree or deny, there must be someone there doing the agreeing - someone doing the denying. Suppose, I say to you that I doubt whether I will be here in the future. Even the act of doubting presupposes the existence of someone. If the doubter is removed, then the doubt cannot remain. So, even to doubt whether I will or will not exist after death, requires the presupposition of the existence of 'I'. The doubter himself is the Pure Consciousness. So, this is the basis - this is the common denominator - this 'I' is the central link in identity. It gives purpose to our lives. It monitors our actions and reactions, hopes and expectations. It suffers - it enjoys - and it continues life. This 'I' is pure consciousness. This is the reality. And this pure consciousness is beyond any and all distinction. Because it is beyond any and all distinction, we cannot say 'It is One, or more than One'. It is called Advaita - not two and not-one either.

Sri Ramakrishna gives a beautiful example to illustrate this fact. He says there are ten pots with water and there is a sun shining in the sky. How many suns are there? One real, and ten reflected. Break one pot. How many suns are there? Ten. Break nine pots. How many suns are there? One real and one in the pot. Break the last pot. How many suns are there? None. There are no more suns left because the last pot is you. When you are broken you are not there to say 'there is one sun remaining' - 'dasamas-tvam-asi' - Thou art the tenth. This is a matter for deep thought. Intellectually you cannot understand this. We must meditate about it. Pure consciousness is the basis of all knowledge. We live in a world of knowledge. Everything is a thought in the mind. There is nothing concrete outside. These are all just impressions -

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photographic impressions. So, pure consciousness is also a thought as long as the mind is there. But without pure consciousness even the thought cannot stand. That is why the Brahmanvidya is said to be the foundation of all knowledge.

So, how do we know that Brahman exists; that God exists; that Reality exists? We do not know. We can only know through scriptures - until we experience it. But we cannot experience Him as we experience each other because He is not an object. He is the seer; He is the subject. That's why it is said, 'God is unknown but not unknowable'. He can be understood. When we become God we know - 'This is Me, I am God.' But we cannot describe it. That is why the Upanishad tells - 'He is adrishyam (invisible), agrayam (imperceptible)'. Through these five sense organs we cannot understand Him - only through faith can we grasp Him. So, through the scriptures we come to know that Brahman or God exists. But we do not see Him. We do not experience Him, although, without Him it is impossible to experience anything else. It is only through His light that we can experience anything at all. We are in the world. 'World' means multiplicity; more than one. What is this world? We call it in common language 'creation'. There are many theories regarding the creation of this world. Most are implausible and illogical. The theory as propounded by Advaita philosophy is very beautiful. God has made Himself appear as the world. Suppose you go to a cinema house. In the theatre there is the projector, there is the screen and there is a film. In the beginning, the projector is turned on and the screen is flooded with light - pure light. Then suddenly the film starts rolling. Images start falling on the screen. We see only images. Are there any objects on the screen? No. What we see is nothing but the light passing through variously coloured frames of film rolling one after the other. In other words, we see various manifestations of the same light. It is all Pure Consciousness which appears to be this world. When this world is perceived through the medium of the eye, it appears as a form. When Brahman is perceived through the ear, it is sensed as sound. When Brahman is perceived through the nose, it is sensed as smell. When Brahman is perceived through the tongue, it is sensed as taste. When Brahman is perceived through the skin, it is sensed as touch. The sense organs are windows through which the light of consciousness is coming to our mind. What we call the 'world' is Brahman perceived by the mind through the sense organs. Limited perception of Brahman is what we call 'world'. (concluded)

Belur Math News

Revered President Maharaj Swami Gahananandaji visited Malaysia and Singapore from September 14th - 27th. He is keeping fairly well.

A portrait of Holy Mother was unveiled at the lobby of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly, Kolkata, by Sri Prabodh Chandra Sinha, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs on August 3rd. The General Secretary and several other distinguished persons spoke on the occasion.

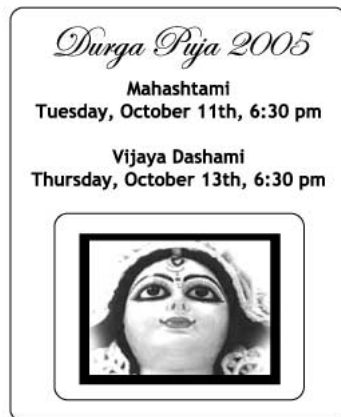
Past Events

This year's **Annual Seminar 'Harmony of Faiths'** was held September 10th, with **Swami Amarananda, Minister of the Centre Vedantique Geneva, Switzerland** as chief guest, and **Swami Sarvadevananda, Assistant Minister, Vedanta Society of Southern California, Los Angeles, USA.** Guest Speakers from Christian, Jewish, Islamic and Hindu faith groups participated in the programme to round out the event.

On September 11th, the **Swami Vivekananda Statue Dedication Ceremony** was held before a large group of devotees. The two Revered Guest Swamis presided over the auspicious programme.

On September 13th, **Swami Amarananda** delivered a special lecture at the **University of Toronto Department of Historical Studies.** The topic was Vivekananda's Thought in the Context of Contemporary Religious Perspectives.

Upcoming Events



The Vedanta Society of Toronto will celebrate **Durga Puja Mahashtami** on **Tuesday, October 11th at 6:30 pm.** The special programme will include homa, worship, bhajans, flower offering and distribution of prasad.

Vijaya Dashami will be celebrated on **Thursday, October 13th at 6:30 pm.**

**Vedanta Society of Toronto
Annual General Meeting**

Sunday, November 13th, 11 am

Any member wishing to nominate an active and willing member of the Vedanta Society of Toronto for service on the Executive Committee may do so by writing to the Society. All nominations must be received by October 30th and be duly proposed and seconded, and approved by Swami Kripamyananda. All our members and friends are requested to attend the meeting.

If you are a member unable to attend, you are invited to designate Swami Kripamyananda, the President of the Vedanta Society of Toronto, or an active member to represent you using the proxy form included with this newsletter. Please complete the form as instructed and ensure that the Society receives it on or before November 13th, or that your appointed designate brings the form with them on the day of the meeting.

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 Kripamyananda 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 Kripamyananda 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 Children's Programme

An educational programme for young people, teaching Indian Spirituality, History, Values, Music and Yoga - is usually held twice a month. The class schedule this month

is **October 2nd** and **October 23rd**. Note: This year, classes are from **1 pm to 4 pm**.

Book Store

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

For other services, please go to our [events](#) page.

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