



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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Newsletter – September 2007

Santi: Peace

Om. May there be peace in heaven. May there be peace in the sky. May there be peace on earth. May there be peace in the waters. May there be peace in the plants. May there be peace in the trees. May there be peace in the gods. May there be peace in Brahman. May there be peace in all. May that peace, real peace, be mine. (Yajur Veda, 36.17)

O tranquil soul, return to your Lord, so pleasant and well pleased! Enter among My servants, and enter My garden. (Quran, 89.27 – 30)

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. (Mathew, 5.9)

Words to Inspire

Address at the Parliament of Religion, Chicago, Final Session September 27, 1893

The World's Parliament of Religions has become an accomplished fact, and the merciful Father has helped those who labored to bring it into existence, and crowned with success their most unselfish labor. My thanks to those noble souls whose large hearts and love of truth first dreamed this wonderful dream and then realized it. My thanks to the shower of liberal sentiments that has overflowed this platform. My thanks to this enlightened audience for their uniform kindness to me and for their appreciation of every thought that tends to smooth the friction of religions. A few jarring notes were heard from time to time in this harmony. My special thanks to them, for they have, by their striking contrast, made general harmony the sweeter. Much has been said of the common ground of religious unity. I am not going just now to venture my own theory. But if anyone here hopes that this unity will come by the triumph of any one of the religions and the destruction of the other, to them I say, "Friends, yours is an impossible hope." Do I wish that the Christian would become Hindu? God forbid. Do I wish that the Hindu or Buddhist would become Christian? God forbid. The seed is put in the ground, and earth and air and water are placed around it. Does the seed become the earth, or the air, or the water? No. It becomes a plant, it develops after the law of its own growth, assimilates the air, the earth, and the water, converts them into plant substance, and grows into a plant. Similar is the case with religion. The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve their individuality and grow according to their own law of growth.

If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if some people still dream

of the exclusive survival of their own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity them from the bottom of my heart, and point out to them that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: "Help and not Fight", "Assimilation and not Destruction"; "Harmony and Peace and not Dissension."

What is Renunciation? – Part III

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

(Concluding portion from June Newsletter :)

Another supreme example of remarkable spiritual transformation is the story of Valmiki, the author of the Ramayana. Valmiki was a highway robber. One day, the great sage Narada was passing by and Valmiki attacked him. Narada asked him why do you incur such great sin by attacking people this way. And Valmiki said, he needs to support his family. Then Narada asked him if his family also takes a share of his sin. "Certainly they do," replied Valmiki. Narada asked Valmiki to tie him up and then go ask his family if they take a share of his sin also. When Valmiki went to his family and asked them, they replied "We didn't know that you have been supporting us by robbing people and killing them. We will not take any part of your sin." When Valmiki heard this, he was devastated. He realized that his family will only take a share of his fortune but not his misfortune. That is the way of the world. His eyes were opened. He came back to Narada and asked him, what is the way out? And Narada said, yes, in this world there are many who will share in your good, but none who will take a share of your evil. There is only one Being who will stand by us regardless of our good or evil. And that is God, the Light of Pure Awareness. Then Narada taught Valmiki how to worship, how to repeat the Divine Name. Valmiki was so crude and uncultured that this was difficult for him. He could not repeat the name of Rama. Then Narada told him to repeat 'Mara' which when repeated several times becomes Rama. This is an echo of Sri Ramakrishna, of how the repetition of a word transforms into a spiritual message. Well, the spiritual vibrations of continuous repetition led Valmiki into first prayer, and then meditation and then transcendence. He was totally absorbed in thought that years passed and ants came and built ant-hills around him and he was not aware of it. He had no awareness of the external body. He was totally absorbed in the Divine Name. After many

years, he heard a voice saying, 'Arise O Sage.'
"Sage?" he replied, "I am a robber."

The voice said, "You are a robber no more. Your old nature is gone. You are now the sage Valmiki." The word 'Valmiki' means 'he that was born in an ant-hill.'

Here again, we see a remarkable transformation. The story of Valmiki is the story of how a highway-robber became a spiritual giant. These stories inspire us and reveal to us, that there is hope for all of us. Our spiritual journey will gain great momentum if we practice bhakti yoga. It is like stepping on the accelerator. Bhakti is the accelerator in our four-wheeled drive. But mere acceleration is no indication of progress. We must be cautious that we don't accelerate into the ditch. This is where psychic control comes into the picture. Raja yoga is the path of psychic control. "Yoga chitta vritti nirodha," says Patanjali in his Yoga sutras. Yoga is the restraining of mental modifications. Thus, as we accelerate on our spiritual journey, we must be alert and aware of where we are going. If we fall asleep at the wheel, there is danger.

Swami Sarvagatananda used to tell us a story of two monks who were on a pilgrimage to the holy city of Benares and they were walking along the Ganges river. One of them sees a blanket floating in the river and says to the other that it would be nice to have that blanket. So he dives into the river and swims towards the blanket. After a while, he shouts for help. Thinking that the blanket was too heavy to swim back with, his friend advises him to let go of the blanket and come away. The poor guy shouts back, "It isn't a blanket, it's a bear." This is what happens to most of us. We are journeying happily on our spiritual path and then, in a complacent mood, we wander here and there and stray from our goal. How often we have gone after blankets only to get caught by a bear! Thus, when we are driving on the spiritual highway, we have to watch out for

bears and step on the breaks and steer around them. This is raja yoga in practice. It is called pratyahara by Patanjali. In explaining this tendency of the mind, Swami Vivekananda writes in his treatise on Raja Yoga, "The two motive powers of our actions are (1) what we see ourselves and (2) the experience of others.

These two forces throw the mind ... into various waves. Renunciation is the power of battling against these forces and holding the mind in check. Their renunciation is what we want. I am passing through the street and a man comes and takes away my watch. That is my own experience. I see it myself, and it immediately throws the Chitta [mind stuff] into a wave, taking the form of anger. Allow not that to come. If you cannot prevent that, you are nothing. If you can, you have vairagya [the power of detachment]. Again, the experience of the worldly-minded teaches us that sense enjoyments are the highest ideal. These are tremendous temptations. To deny them, and not allow the mind to come to a wave form with regard to them, is renunciation. To control the two fold motive powers arising from my own experience and from experience of others, and thus prevent the chitta from being governed by them is vairagya. These should be controlled by me, not I by them. This sort of mental strength is called renunciation." (Volume 1, p. 209)

To summarise, renunciation refers to the renunciation of our lower nature so that our higher nature manifests. It is the giving up of our lower tendencies. But there is a positive side to it. By turning our mental energies in the higher spiritual direction, we transform ourselves and gain inner strength. Whenever a puppy dog barks, it won't bother us because we are firmly grounded on the spiritual path. We have prioritised our life appropriately. By directing our thoughts (jnana), directing our actions (karma), directing our emotions (bhakti) in the Godward direction, and watching out for bears and steering away from bear traps (raja), we realise our spiritual dimension.

The supreme example of renunciation is Sri Ramakrishna. His mind was always fixed at the feet of the Divine Mother. Renunciation was the ornament of Sri Ramakrishna, according to the Holy Mother. By his life, he has taught us how to live our life. There is nothing to reject, he said. Take all your energies and turn them Godward. On the first day of M.'s visit to Sri Ramakrishna, he said, "A maidservant in the house of a rich man performs all

the household duties, but her thoughts are fixed on her own home in her native village. She brings up her master's children as if they were her own. She even speaks of them as 'my Rama' or 'my Hari'. But in her own mind, she knows very well that they do not belong to her at all. The tortoise moves about in the water. But can you guess where her thoughts are? There on the bank, where her eggs are lying. Do all your duties in the world, but keep your mind on God. If you enter the world without first cultivating love for God, you will be entangled more and more. You will be overwhelmed with its danger, its grief and its sorrows. And the more you think of worldly things, the more you will be attached to them. First rub your hands with oil and then break open the jack-fruit; otherwise they will be smeared with its sticky milk. First secure the oil of divine love and then set your hands to the duties of the world. ...

By meditating on God in solitude, the mind acquires knowledge, dispassion and devotion." (Kathamrita, p. 81-82.)

Thus, renunciation is a detaching of the mind from our lower tendencies and attaching it to our higher dimension. There is nothing to reject. Just turn the direction. It comes down to the proper use of what we have. As Tulsidas so beautifully put it, take all your attachments and make it into a twine rope and use it to reach God.

Bhadram karnebhi srupaya ma devah
Bhadram pasyema ksabhir yajatrah
Sthirair angais tustuvam sasthanubhih
Vyasema deva hitam yada yuh
Om santih sanitih santih

May we, O Gods, hear what is auspicious with our ears.
O Ye, who are worthy of worship, may we see with our eyes what is auspicious. May we enjoy the life allotted to us by the gods, offering praise, with our bodies strong of limb. Om peace, peace, peace.

This is my prayer. (Concluded)



From the book - 'The Call of the Gita'

If there is anything in the Gita that I like, it is these two verses, coming out strong as the very gist, the very essence of Krishna's teaching - " He who sees the Supreme Lord dwelling alike in all beings, the Imperishable in things that perish, he sees indeed. For seeing the Lord as the same, everywhere present, he does not destroy the Self by the self, and thus he goes to the highest goal." (CW - Vol 8 27-28)

Lord Krishna says - "You can offer me anything as a token - a leaf, a flower, a fruit or mere water. I do not assess devotion by costliness of what is offered but by the sincerity behind it." The Lord elaborates this point from another angle in the Chapter 12 where he conducts what looks like a 'Dutch auction'. He asks Arjuna to fix his mind on Him alone. "Let your intellect rest in Me and you will live in Me hereafter." Noting the diffidence on the face of his bosom friend, he gives an alternative. "If, however, you are not able to fix the mind steadily on Me, then seek to attain Me through the Yoga of Abhyasa or practice." Then in his infinite compassion, he goes further: "if you are unable even to practice, you do all your work for My sake." And then comes the crowning advice: "if you are unable to do even this, take refuge in Me and renounce the fruits of all actions." He gives the guarantee: as soon as the fruits of actions are given up, peace dawns immediately.

So tyaga is preached as the ultimate and easiest method. We may recall Sri Ramakrishna's observation about the gist of word "Gita". He says: repeat the word 'Gita' ten times quickly. The repetition produces the reverse chain tagi, tagi which indicates that Tyaga is the central behest of the Gita.



Special events

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| September 3, 2007 – 6.30pm | : | Janmashtami Celebration |
| September 8, 2007 – 9am – 4pm: | | Annual Seminar on 'God-centric Life' |
| September 9, 2007 – 11am | : | Lecture by Swami Tathagatananda on
'Swami Advaitananda: a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna' |
| September 16, 2007 – 11am | : | Lecture by Swami Sridharananda on
'Sri Ramakrishna in the eyes of Swami Vivekananda |
| 12.15pm | : | Devotional songs by Shantanu and Durba
Bhattacharyya accompanied on Tabla by
Ashok Datta |

7.30pm : Informal talk by Swami Sridharananda

September 25, 2007 – 7.30pm : Informal talk by Swami Bhaskarananda

BELUR MATH NEWS

Cherrapunji centre organized a function on 9 June to mark the first phase of its platinum jubilee celebrations. Swami Atmasthanandaji, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, presided over the function and released the new edition of The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna in Khasi language brought out by the Ashrama. Sri B L Joshi, Governor of Meghalaya, released the platinum jubilee souvenir.

In response to our proposal to the Government of West Bengal, its Department of Technical Education & Training has issued an order sanctioning transposition of the Shilpamandira (Saradapitha), Belur, previously a Government-sponsored Polytechnic, into a Self-financing Polytechnic with

diploma courses in Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering with effect from July 2007.

Sri Sudeep Banerjee, Adviser, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, inaugurated the Vivekananda University's new Faculty of General & Adapted Physical Education and Yoga at Coimbatore Mission centre on 2 May. Mr Troy W Greisen, Managing Director, Asia Specific Special Olympics, was the Guest-in-Chief at the function.

The Department of Scientific & Industrial Research, Ministry of Science & Technology, Government of India, has recognized our Narendrapur college as a Scientific & Industrial Research Organization.

Up coming Events

Durga Puja – Mahashtami – Oct 19, 2007 11 am
Vijaya Dashami – Oct 21, 2007 6pm

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, Sep 15, 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, Sep 23 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 Sep 13, 20 and 25. 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

SEPTEMBER 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						<u>1</u>
<u>2</u>	<u>3</u> <i>6.30pm</i> <i>Special Program:</i> Janmashtami	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u> <i>9am</i> Annual Seminar
<u>9</u> <i>11 am</i> Guest Lecture by Swami Tathagatananda	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u> <i>9 am</i> Soup Kitchen	<u>14</u> <i>7:30pm</i> (No scripture class)	<u>15</u> <i>6 am to 6 pm</i> Vigil:
<u>16</u> <i>11am</i> Guest Lecture by Swami Sridharananda 7.30pm – informal talk	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>20</u> <i>9 am</i> Soup Kitchen	<u>21</u> <i>7:30pm</i> <i>Scripture class</i> Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna	<u>22</u>
<u>23</u> <i>11am Lecture:</i> Karma Yoga – what it is? 1.30 pm – Vidya Mandir 5 pm: Ram Nam	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u> <i>9am</i> Soup Kitchen <i>7.30pm</i> <i>Informal talk by</i> Swami Bhaskara - nanda	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u> <i>7.30pm</i> <i>Scripture class</i> Tattvabodha	<u>29</u>
<u>30</u> <i>11 am Lecture:</i> Precondition for Devotion						

ANNUAL SEMINAR with Swami Tathagatananda

Sep 9: 9 am to 4 pm

There is a registration fee of \$35 per person for this one-day program. If you wish to participate, please submit the attached form to the Vedanta Society by mail, fax, or in person.

2007 Annual Seminar
Registration Form

This year, the Vedanta Society will hold its Annual Seminar on **Saturday, Sep 8, 2007**. The seminar will be conducted by eminent speakers representing different faith groups. The program will take place at the Vedanta Society, 120 Emmett Avenue, Toronto.

The theme of this year's seminar is the '**God-centric Life**'. The Seminar 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 at 9 am on Saturday and will conclude at 4 pm. The day will be spent in discussing spiritual ideas of practical importance from different faiths, group discussions among the attendees followed by panel discussions.

The registration fee this year is \$35.00 only. The fee includes tea, lunch and evening tea. Menu items will be vegetarian.

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

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ email: _____

Number of Participants:

8th Sep 2007 (Saturday) _____ x \$35.00 = \$ _____

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

Signature _____

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