



Newsletter September 2006

'We stand in the present, but open ourselves to the infinite future. We take in all that has been in the past, enjoy the light of the present, and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future. Salutations to all the prophets of the past, to all the great ones of the present, and to all that are to come in the future. '

- Swami Vivekananda

Words To Inspire

Each nation has a mission of its own to perform in this harmony of races, and so long as that nation keeps to that ideal, nothing can kill that nation. But if that nation gives up its mission in life and goes after something else, its life becomes short and vanishes.

And so with religions. The fact that all these old religions are living today proves that they must have kept that mission intact. In spite of all their mistakes, in spite of all difficulties, in spite of all quarrels, in spite of all the incrustation of forms and figures, the heart of every one of them is sound - it is a throbbing, beating, living heart. They have not lost, any one of them, the great mission they came for. And it is splendid to study that mission. Take Mohammedanism, for instance. Islam makes its followers all equal. What Mohammedanism comes to preach to the world is this practical brotherhood of all belonging to their faith. That is the essential part of the Mohammedan religion. With the Hindus you will find one national idea: spirituality. In no other religion, in no other sacred books of the world, will you find so much energy spent in defining the idea of God. They tried to define the idea of the soul so that no earthly touch might mar it. Renunciation and spirituality are the two great ideas of India, and it is because India clings to these ideas that all her mistakes count for so little.

I accept all religions that were in the past, and worship them all. I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedan; I shall enter the Christian's church and kneel before the crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhistic temple, where I shall take refuge in Buddha and his law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu, who is trying to see the Light which enlightens the heart of everyone.

- Swami Vivekananda

How The Mind Works (Part II)

(Based on a talk by M. Ram Murty, Ph. D., Dep't of Mathematics, Queen's University, Canada delivered at the Vedanta Society of Toronto on April 9th, 2006)

The law of habit is a scientific law. Whether it is a good habit or a bad habit, its operation is the same. This understanding therefore can lead us to form good habits. In fact, our virtues, our talents are really our good habits. We fashioned them using our own hands. In this connection, we can be inspired by looking at the great minds of the past. This is what Vivekananda means when he says that we are heirs to all the great thoughts of the past if we open ourselves to them. This opening ourselves to the great thoughts is really the essence of education.

Here then, we find the value of study. But this study must inspire and we often find in life that it is life that inspires life. Thus, a study of great lives energizes the mind and gathers it for the purpose of concentration. The great Isaac Newton used to say, "If I have been able to see this far, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants."

I remember that when I was studying the life of Mahatma Gandhi, he related the time he was studying to be a lawyer and that he had rather slovenly study habits. He writes, "I used to attend High Court daily while in Bombay, but I cannot say that I learnt anything there. I had not sufficient knowledge to learn much. Often I could not follow the cases and dozed off. There were others also who kept me company in this, and thus lightened my load of shame. After a time, I even lost the sense of shame, as I learnt to think that it was fashionable to doze in the High Court." (See M.K. Gandhi, *Experiments in Truth*, p. 80.) If a person like Gandhi started out like this and changed the course of his life by changing his habits, there is hope for all of us. That is the value of studying the lives of great people.

When we go to school or a university, or when we simply pick up a great book to read, we are connecting ourselves to a stream of thought to be energized and vivified by it. From generation to generation, humanity has valued thought greatly that it has tried to preserve it and hand it over to the next generation. This is what is called "teaching." In fact, in the Samkhya system of philosophy, it is recognized that a steady stream of knowledge has always been flowing.

This mighty river of teaching can be traced back to time immemorial. In Patanjali's yoga sutras, we find, "Isvara is the Teacher of even the ancient teachers, being not limited by time. Its manifesting word is Om."

In many of the Upanishads, and even in the Bhagavadgita, we find a recitation of how the teaching had been handed down from generation to generation. The sages were astutely aware of the mighty stream of teaching. This awareness is a powerful motivation for sustaining purpose and keeping the mind focussed. This is what Patanjali means by "devotion to Isvara."

Thus, awareness of this timeless tradition of teaching is really "devotion to

Isvara" according to Patanjali. What is gained by this devotion? Patanjali says, the mind is brought under control and it is easier to form good habits through this devotion. Mental obstacles are not destroyed by direct confrontation, but rather by devotion to the "mighty river of teaching and example." This is corroborated by daily experience. Attention is like a magnifying glass. When we give attention to anything, that very thing becomes magnified. Thus, the way to diminish the effect of mental obstacles is to keep focussed on the goal through devotion.

Returning to Mahatma Gandhi, he writes in his autobiography, that one day, he decided to put an end to his sloppiness and inherent laziness. "I had made it a rule to walk to the High Court. It took me 45 minutes and of course, I invariably returned home on foot. I had inured myself to the heat of the sun. This walk to and from the court saved a fair amount of money, and when many of my friends in Bombay used to fall ill, I do not remember having once had an illness. Even when

I began to earn money, I kept up the practice of walking to and from the office and I am still reaping the benefits of that practice... I believe that no matter what amount of work one has, one should always find some time for exercise, just as one does for one's meals. It is my humble opinion that, far from taking away from one's capacity for work, it adds to it." (See M.K. Gandhi, Experiments in Truth, p. 81 and 195.)

It is curious that thinking is extolled as the main function of the mind. However, thinking is only one of its faculties. There are others, such as feeling, willing and restraining. In the ancient Indian philosophical tradition, these four faculties were given special attention. The question was asked how these four faculties can be sharpened and refined and taken in a higher direction. The age of reason can be said to have begun with the exercising of thinking, of questioning, of inquiry into the nature of things. The three other faculties must be raised to the same level of refinement. These four faculties are in every individual. The four yogas, namely, jnana yoga, bhakti yoga, karma yoga and raja yoga, address this question of how we may refine these faculties of the mind and take them in a higher direction.

Swami Sarvagatananda has taught us long ago that these four yogas are like the four-wheel drive. The analogy is very apt. I began this discourse by saying that we need not know how a car was manufactured or how it works in order to drive the car. With respect to the mind, we are somewhat in the same position. We may not know exactly how the mind works, which neural networks and neuro-transmitters are firing at any given moment, or whether the brain has produced the mind or the mind produced the brain. But we do need to know how to steer this mind through the highways of life and how to reach our destination.

Bhakti or devotion is a powerful force. No one can deny the strength of human emotion. But human emotion is not something to be rejected, as many of the medieval saints and philosophers tried to do. As we all know, the very thing we try to reject comes back to us with re-doubled force. This is a well-known psychological law that we are all familiar with. The secret is to give this force

a higher direction. This is the essence of bhakti yoga.

Love is dynamic. It is a curious fact that love manifests through interest and attention. For example, at first, we may not be interested in mathematics, let's say. But as one pays attention, and tries to get interested in it, love emerges and this love generates will power. This brings us to the faculty of willing. Karma yoga is the method by which this faculty can be given a higher direction.

This brings us to the faculty of restraining. Patanjali says that yoga is the restraining of the mind and preventing from taking various thought forms.

Yoga chittavritti nirodah.

"Yoga is restraining the mind stuff from taking various forms." What does this mean? It means that we have to reflect. We cannot simply react to events. If we observe carefully, there is a part of us that is always observing what we do. We must examine ourselves and bring in this higher awareness. When we do, we are reflecting. A wave of anger comes, and instead of reacting and giving into anger, we can change it. We can bring in the opposite feeling.

Thus, in dealing with the mind, all four faculties must be unified through the four-fold yoga, and this makes the task of controlling the mind much easier.

The controlled mind becomes our friend, our companion in life. May we all gain purity of mind and reach the ultimate goal of supreme awareness and realize the light of Brahman within. This is my prayer.

Quantum Leap

Rabindranath Tagore's Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech - 1913

I was an obscure individual - to most of my countrymen in those days. I mean that my name was hardly outside my own province, but I was quite content with that obscurity, which protected me from the curiosity of the crowds. And then came a time when my heart felt a longing to come out of that solitude and to do some work for my human fellowbeings, and not merely give shapes to my dreams and meditate deeply on the problems of life, but try to give expression to my ideas through some definite work, some definitive service for my fellowbeings.

And the one thing, the one work, which came to my mind, was to teach children. It was not because I was specially fitted for this work of teaching, for I had not had myself the full benefit of a regular education. For some time I hesitated to take upon myself this task, but I felt that as I had a deep love for nature I had naturally love for children also. My object in starting this institution was to give the children of men full freedom of joy, of life and communion with nature. I myself had suffered when I was young through impediments which were inflicted upon most boys while they attended school and I have had to go through the machine of education which crushes the joy and freedom of life for which children have such insatiable thirst. And my

object was to give freedom and joy to children of men.

And so I had a few boys around me, and I taught them, and I tried to make them happy. I was their playmate. I was their companion. I shared their life, and I felt that I was the biggest child of the party. And we all grew up together in this atmosphere of freedom.

The vigour and the joy of the children, their chats and songs filled the air with a spirit of delight, which I drank every day and I was there. And in the evening during the sun-set hour I oftentimes used to sit alone watching the tress of the shadowing avenue and in the silence of the afternoon I could hear distinctly the voices of the children coming up in the air, and it seemed to me that these shouts and songs and glad voices were like those trees, which come out from the heart of the earth like fountains of life towards the bosom of the infinite sky. And it symbolized, it brought before my mind the whole cry of human life all expressions of joy and aspirations of men rising from the heart of Humanity up to the sky. I could see that, and I knew that we also, the grown-up children, send up our cries of aspiration to the Infinite. I felt it in my heart of hearts.

In this atmosphere and in this environment I used to write my poems Gitanjali, and I sang them to myself in the midnight under glorious stars of the Indian sky. And in the early morning and in the afternoon low of sunset I used to write these songs till a day came when I felt impelled to come out once again and meet the heart of the large world.

I could see that my coming out from the seclusion of life among these joyful children and doing my service to my fellow creatures was only a prelude to my pilgrimage to a larger world. And I felt a great desire to come out and come into touch with the Humanity of the West, for I was conscious that the present age belongs to the western man with his superabundance of energy.

He has got the power of the whole world, and his life is overflowing all boundaries and is sending out its message to the great future. And I felt that I must before I die come to the West and meet the man of the secret shrine where the Divine presence has his dwelling, his temple.

Upcoming Events

Annual Seminar 2006: *Integration of Personality*

Special Guest: **Swami Baneshananda**, Head of Vedanta Gesellschaft, Bindeweide, Germany.

A One Day Interfaith Service Featuring
Guest Speakers Representing
The World's Major Faith Traditions.

Saturday, September 9th, 2006
from 8:30 am to 4 pm.

Registration is required. Cost is \$30.
Special discounts for students. Lunch and Tea are provided.
Deadline for registration: Sep. 2nd.

Durga Puja 2006

Maha Ashtami: Saturday, September 30th, 2006 11 am.

Vijaya Dashami: Monday, October 2nd, 2006 6:30 pm.

Past Events

On July 11th, the Vedanta Society celebrated **Guru Purnima**, and on August 15th, the Society celebrated **Janmashtami**, the birth of Sri Krishna. Both events featured special programmes of readings, bhajans, meditation and the partaking of prasad. Many devotees came to participate both with reverence and due solemnity.

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 8 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

September 2006

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
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| | | | | | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> |
| <p>Summer Break - Regular Services resume from Saturday, September 9th.</p> <p>Swami Kripamayanandaji will be visiting Calgary, Edmonton and Yellowknife from Aug. 28th to Sep. 3rd. And he will be in Winnipeg from Sep. 21st to the 25th.</p> | | | | | | |
| | | | | | <u>8</u> | <u>9</u> Annual Seminar <i>Integration of Personality</i> 8:30 am - 4 pm |
| <u>10</u> Lecture*: Desire: Friend or Foe? 11 am | <p>Sep. 10th, Guest Speaker:</p> <p>Swami Baneshananda Head of Vedanta Gesellschaft, Germany</p> | | <u>13</u> | <u>14</u> | <u>15</u> Scripture Class: <i>Life of Swami Abhedananda</i> 7:30 pm | <u>16</u> Vigil 6 am - 6 pm |
| <u>17</u> Lecture*: Forbearance 11 am Vedanta Vidya Mandir 1 pm | <p>Sep. 17th, Guest Speaker:</p> <p>Swami Sarvadevananda Assistant Minister, Vedanta Society of Southern California, USA</p> | | <u>20</u> | <u>21</u> | <u>22</u> Scripture Class: <i>Life of Swami Akhandananda</i> 7:30 pm | <u>23</u> Soup Kitchen 9:30 am |
| <u>24</u> Lecture*: Worship of Divine Mother 11 am Ram Nam 5 pm | <p>Sep. 24th, Guest Speaker:</p> <p>Dr. Sitansu Sekhar Chakravarti Scholar & Author</p> | | <u>27</u> | <u>28</u> | <u>29</u> No Scripture Class | <u>30</u> Public Celebration: Durga Puja Maha Ashtami 11 am |

The third-rate mind is only happy when it is thinking with the majority.
The second-rate mind is only happy when it is thinking with the minority.
The first-rate mind is only happy when it is thinking.

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