



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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Words to Inspire

“ As you repeat the mantra of a Chosen Deity, think of His form as well; thus you can have both japa and meditation simultaneously. God dwells in the heart, and He sees how earnest one is in calling on Him .”

- Swami Shivananda, For Seekers. page 162 -

MIND AND MEDITATION

(Swami Brahmeshananda – Vedanta Kesari – 141 - April 2007)

Question: *Some say that meditation is a process of getting rid of thoughts. If so, then what is that which brings thoughts in to our mind? How to minimize these thoughts?*

Answer: Mind means thoughts, a stream of thoughts. Mind cannot remain silent even for a moment. It is only in the highest Samadhi that becomes free from all thoughts, which means mind becomes non-existent, as it were. But one begins one's meditation by maintaining a single type of thought in the mind.

From where do thoughts come? They arise either from external stimuli created by our five senses such as sight, sound and touch or from the subconscious mind where our past impressions are stored. When we sit for a meditation with closed eyes in a solitary place, external stimuli are cut down to the minimum, but thoughts continue to arise from the subconscious mind. These must be controlled by steady, patient and devoted practice for a long time.

Question: *Even after practice to calm the mind, there is always a voice behind that is still speaking and disturbing. How to stop this voice?*

Answer: The disturbing and speaking voice of which you are talking is nothing but the restless mind. This mental noise indicates that the mind has not yet been fully concentrated. In a perfect concentration, only the object of concentration fully occupies the mind. Then there is no mental noise or voice speaking inside. Constant practice with zeal and determination is the only solution to calm that disturbance.

Question: *Yoga and meditation, it is said, bring relaxation. How are they related to spiritual life or to God?*

Answer: It is unfortunate that now-a-days Yoga and meditation are being done for relaxation or for improvement of the concentration only and not for God realization. But the tradition of sanatana dharma considers that as most important means to for God realization and spiritual development. Relaxation and better concentration are only its by-products. Spiritual life, or God-centered life, essentially means having:

- A spiritual goal of life,
- Considering God or Soul as the essential truths of existence, much more real than matter,
- Regarding oneself as a spiritual entity and not merely a body-mind complex, and
- Following a definite path to attain spiritual goal.

Yoga believes in all these, and meditation as a powerful means to attain the goal of yoga, which is experiencing our real self, God himself.

(A former editor of The Vedanta Kesari, the author is presently the Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Chandigarh India)

PRESCRIPTION FOR SUCCESS: THE GITA APPROACH (*Part I*)

Bhagvad Gita is a mine of helpful thoughts, ideas and guidelines on the 'Art and Science of Life'. It shows us the way to live a life with vigor and vitality – a fulfilled life. Along with such a life, it also shows us the path of inward contemplation in order to achieve the summum-bonum of life – SELF REALIZATION.

Gandhi ji says about Gita¹ "When disappointment stares me in the face and all alone I see not one ray of light, I go back to the Bhagvad Gita. I find a verse here and a verse there, and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming tragedies – and my life has been full of external tragedies – and if they have left no visible or indelible scar on me, I owe it all to the teaching of Bhagvad Gita."

All of us are greatly interested in achieving success in life. All our education, training and efforts have this one goal – How to succeed in life, how to achieve this goal? But firstly, what does it mean to be successful? How do you define it? What does it exactly mean?

Is it making lots of money, or name and fame or other achievements and accomplishments? In achieving such goals, does it matter how such goals were achieved? Were the means used to achieve such goals proper? Were they fair or foul? Or it does not matter?

Vendanta presents us with another picture of what 'success in life' means. This picture is presented in the concluding verses of the well-known Vishnu Sahsrnama²:

"Whichever devoted man, getting up early in the morning and purifying himself, repeats this hymn devoted to Vasudeva, with a mind that is concentrated on Him.

That man attains to great fame, leadership among his peers, wealth that is secure and the supreme good unsurpassed by anything.

He will be free from all fears, and be endowed with great courage and energy and he will be free from diseases. Beauty of form, strength of body and mind and virtuous character will be natural to him.

One who reads this hymn everyday with DEVOTION and Attention, attains to peace of mind, patience, prosperity, mental stability, memory and good reputation." Tulsidas ji in his Ramayana says the same thing³:

"sur durlabha sukha kari jag mahin I antakal raghupati pur jahin II"

Those who listen attentively and with devotion to this Ramkatha, will experience sukha (all around joy, happiness and contentment) far superior than the devatas (gods) in this world, and ultimately – after death – go to the abode of Sri Rama:

So this is the concept of success and happiness in the vedantic tradition.

In my opinion, this is a far superior definition of success than what is understood generally. It encompasses not only material success for the individual but also includes virtues such as virtuous character, peace of mind, mental stability and 'supreme good unsurpassed by anything (i.e. self realization). These values can develop only when the means of achieving them are moral and ethical.

Thus, the society at large is not hurt in any way by such a person, rather, the society benefits tremendously by such an individual. Such a person really acts as a great role model, or as an ideal. The question is: how do you achieve these values which will lead us to success and happiness? What are the qualities required in our personality to achieve all this?

We know that to achieve anything, effort is needed. Higher the goal, greater the effort. Effort means we have to work towards the goal or to perform such actions that will lead us to the desired goal, in this case achieving success.

A slight digression

In order to develop an understanding of our effort towards achieving success in life, it is essential to understand the various steps involved before an action takes place.

Before any action takes place, the mind examines or looks at various scenarios and alternatives which arise in the mind.

At the decision time, that is, when we are ready to select one scenario over others, another faculty of the mind kicks in, we will call it 'intelligence (our buddhi)'. Buddhi then decides (based on its quality) or selects an alternative (or a scenario) and then the 'action gets performed'.

Thus, it follows that if the 'quality' of buddhi is highly evolved (it is pure, bright and luminous), our decisions will be right and proper and thus, will be highly conducive to achieving success.

The question then arises, what is this 'evolved buddhi'? What do we mean by that? Are there grades of buddhi? What are they?

Here the Bhagvad Gita comes to our help. The Flute Player Krishna tells us, there are three types of buddhi (Chap. XVIII, verses 30, 31 and 32).

Type 1. The Best Type (Sattwika Buddhi).

Such a buddhi can readily judge things that are to be done and things that are to be avoided. There is clarity in thinking.

It correctly discerns what ought to be done and what ought not to be done? (that is what is right and what is wrong and then the will to do the right thing). Such a buddhi has the fortitude (dhriti) to do the right thing (right action).

In addition, such a buddhi also, is pure (that is free from lust, greed, anger, egoity, jealousy, malice, attachment, etc.). There is a steadiness and equanimity in such a buddhi.

Type 2. The Intermediate Type (Rajasika Buddhi).

Such a buddhi wrongly understand what is right conduct and what is wrong conduct. There is little clarity in thinking.

Also, what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, is wrongly understood.

In addition, such a buddhi has activity and passion behind all actions. There is tremendous amount of attachment and egoism in the personality.

Type 3. The Lowest Type (Tamasika Buddhi).

¹Such a buddhi sees wrong as right, reversing every value involved in darkness or ignorance and therefore sees all things in a perverted way.

Such a buddhi is ever contrary to righteousness (or dharma). Such a buddhi is considered full of darkness, ignorance, dullness and inertia.

Thus, the most desirable type of buddhi (intelligence) knows what will be attained by

performing a particular action? What will be the consequences of such actions?

Such a buddhi (intelligence), thus, has a quality, which we will call 'Power of discrimination' which knows good from bad, right from wrong and has the necessary will power to do the right thing or the right action. Such a quality – this power of discrimination – is called in samskrit 'Viveka'.

A corollary to this quality of 'viveka', is that one will have to be objective, unbiased during the decision making process. One cannot allow one's emotions, fancies, attachments, etc. to enter into the picture during the decision making stage. This quality of objectivity, being unbiased or remaining unattached is called in samskrit 'vairagya'.

Thus, as the buddhi develops to its highest level (Type 1. Sattwika buddhi), these two qualities of viveka (power of discrimination) and vairagya (objectivity, non-attachment) also develop automatically to their highest level.

It goes without saying, that as our buddhi develops to its highest level (Type 1), our capability to make the right decisions increases tremendously and the right decisions, in turn, improve our chances to succeed in life tremendously.

It is thus seen that *development of Type 1 buddhi (sattwika buddhi) is the key, the basis, the foundation* to lead a successful, fruitful and harmonious life. Scriptures also say: '*sattvey shuddhi kriya siddhi*' – purification of buddhi, that is, achievement of sattwika buddhi results in fulfillment of actions.

Not only this, but Type 1 buddhi (Sattwika buddhi) has another extremely great advantage – achievement of the supreme good unsurpassed by anything – that is, 'self-realization'. Self-realization is the goal of life, summum-bonum of life 'moksha'. This transforms us into 'divine'. Swami Vivekananda has said time and time again, 'our true nature is divine'. Attainment of sattwika buddhi makes us realize that. Sri Ramakrishna also used to say, there is no difference between 'pure sattwika buddhi and Brahman.

Thus, development of Type 1 buddhi (Sattwika buddhi) makes everything possible. The *process of achieving* or attaining the 'sattwika buddhi' is extremely important and highly worth pursuing.

Not only it guides us through life (essentially, it is the ART AND SCIENCE OF LIFE), but it ultimately transforms us into DIVINE.

(To be Continued)

¹ References

1. The Vendanta Kesari, vol. 95, No. 12, P. 601, Dec. 2008 'Gita for Everyday Living'. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004, India.
2. Sri Vishnu Sahasranama of Adi Shankraeharya. Translated by Swami Tapasyananda, Sri Rama Krishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600 004, India. Pages 37-38, verses 3-5, 7, (1986).
3. Ramayana by Tulsidas, Gita Press, Gorakhpur, India. Uttarkanda 7/15(2).
4. The Vendanta Kesari, vol. 95, No. 12, Dec. 2008. Back Cover. 'Gita for Everyday Living'. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004, India.

KALI TEMPLE AT DAKSHINESWAR

(Continued – Part IV)

The real devotee knows the absurdity of worshipping the Transcendental Reality with material articles -- clothing That which pervades the whole universe and the beyond, putting on a pedestal That which cannot be limited by space, feeding That which is disembodied and incorporeal, singing before That whose glory the music of the spheres tries vainly to proclaim. But through these rites the devotee aspires to go ultimately beyond rites and rituals, forms and names, words and praise, and to realize God as the All-pervading Consciousness.

Hindu priests are thoroughly acquainted with the rites of worship, but few of them are aware of their underlying significance. They move their hands and limbs mechanically, in obedience to the letter of the scriptures, and repeat the holy mantras like parrots. But from the very beginning the inner meaning of these rites was revealed to Sri Ramakrishna. As he sat facing the image, a strange transformation came over his mind.

While going through the prescribed ceremonies, he would actually find himself encircled by a wall of fire protecting him and the place of worship from unspiritual vibrations, or he would feel the rising of the mystic Kundalini through the different centers of the body. The glow on his face, his deep absorption, and the intense atmosphere of the

temple impressed everyone who saw him worship the Deity.

Ramkumar wanted Sri Ramakrishna to learn the intricate rituals of the worship of Kali. To become a priest of Kali one must undergo a special form of initiation from a qualified guru, and for Sri Ramakrishna a suitable brahmin was found. But no sooner did the brahmin speak the holy word in his ear than Sri Ramakrishna, overwhelmed with emotion, uttered a loud cry and plunged into deep concentration.

Mathur begged Sri Ramakrishna to take charge of the worship in the Kali temple. The young priest pleaded his incompetence and his ignorance of the scriptures. Mathur insisted that devotion and sincerity would more than compensate for any lack of formal knowledge and make the Divine Mother manifest Herself through the image.

In the end, Sri Ramakrishna had to yield to Mathur's request. He became the priest of Kali. In 1856 Ramkumar breathed his last. Sri Ramakrishna had already witnessed more than one death in the family. He had come to realize how impermanent is life on earth. The more he was convinced of the transitory nature of worldly things, the more eager he became to realize God, the Fountain of Immortality.

(Concluded)

BELUR MATH NEWS

Itanagar centre celebrated its 30th Anniversary on 10 and 11 May. Sri J J Singh, Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, inaugurated the new Out Patient Department (OPD) block of the hospital. Swami Smarananandaji declared open a new building housing Intensive Care Unit (ICU), Intensive Cardiac Care Unit (ICCU) and eye ward.

Guwahati centre conducted a medical camp during Ambuvachi Mela at Kamakhya Dham from 22 to 25 June in which 3611 patients were treated.

Vadodara centre felicitated 111 brilliant students of Gujarat on 21 June in the presence of several dignitaries, teachers, students and parents. Sri P N Bhagwati, former Chief Justice of India, presided over the function.

The newly built extension to the Matriculation Higher Secondary School building of **Chennai Mission Ashrama** was inaugurated on 18 June.

Chennai Math conducted a three-day All Tamil Nadu Youth Retreat from 4 to 6 June in which 200 young men participated.

Swami Prabhanandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the diabetic retinopathy wing of Sarada Netralaya at **Patna** centre on 16 June.

Swami Prabhanandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the mobile medical unit of **Muzaffarpur** centre on 19 June.

In a function held at the **Institute of Culture**, Kolkata, on 18 March, Swami Atmasthanandaji, President, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, presented the Vivekananda Award, comprising a cash award of one lakh rupees and a citation, to Sri Asim Chaudhuri of USA for his two books *Swami Vivekananda in America – New Findings* and *Swami Vivekananda in Chicago – New Findings*. Sri S.S. Nijjar, Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court, presided over the meeting.

SUMMARY OF PAST EVENTS

The **Guru Purnima** was celebrated on **Tuesday, 7th July 2009 at 6:30pm.** with bhajan, reading, puja, worship, flower offering followed by prasad distribution.

Pravrajika Amalaprana Mataji, General Secretary, Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, India spoke on

'**The Significance of Guru Purnima**' on Tuesday July 7th at 7:00pm.

The **Krishna Janmashtami** was held on **Thursday, August 13, 2009 at 6.30 pm.** The programme consists bhajans, discourse, flower offering followed by prasad distribution. About **250** devotees attended the programme.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Kali Puja will be celebrated on **Saturday, 17th October 2009 at 6:30pm.** with

bhajan, reading, puja, worship, flower offering followed by 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, September 12, 2009, 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, September 13, 2009 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 now served four days a month at Roncesvalles Food Sharing, 263 Roncesvalles Avenue, Toronto M6R 2L9. 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.

Annual Seminar and Spiritual Retreat

- 1. The Annual Seminar with Swami Ishtananda, Minister, Vedanta Center of St. Petersburg, Florida as the Chief Guest on Saturday, September 05, 2009. There is a registration fee of \$35/Adult and \$10/Student.**
- 2. Spiritual Retreat on Bhagavad Gita conducted by Swami Sridharananda, Minister & President of Vedanta Centre, Sydney, Australia, from Friday September 18, 4:00 pm to Sunday, September 20, 5:30pm. The theme of the Retreat is "WAYS TO PERFECTION AS TAUGHT IN THE BHAGAVAD GITA". There is a registration fee of \$100/person. Last date of Registration is August 31, 2009. Space is limited and will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis.**

Vedanta Society of Toronto

Minister and Teacher- Swami Kripamayananda,
Ramakrishna Order of India

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		<u>1</u> 10 am Soup Kitchen	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u> ANNUAL SEMINAR
<u>6</u> 11 am: Guest Lecture "Message of the Bhagavad Gita" by Swami Ishtananda	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u> 10 am Soup Kitchen	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u> No Scripture Class	<u>12</u>
<u>13</u> 11 am: Lecture 'Swamiji and the Parliament of Religions' VVM 1:30 pm RAM NAM 5:00 pm	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u> 10 am Soup Kitchen	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u> Spiritual Retreat	<u>19</u> Spiritual Retreat
<u>20</u> Spiritual Retreat	<u>21</u>	<u>22</u> 10 am Soup Kitchen	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u> No Scripture Class	<u>26</u> <u>11 am</u> Durga Puja
<u>27</u> 11am: Guest Lecture by Prof. V. Balaji	<u>28</u> 6:30pm VIJAYA DASHAMI	<u>29</u> 10 am Soup Kitchen	<u>30</u>			

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Vedanta Society of Toronto's Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday, **November 22, 2009 at 11:00 am**. Any member wishing to nominate an active and willing member of the Vedanta Society for the Executive Committee may do so by writing to the Society. **All nominations must be received by November 8, 2009** and be duly proposed and seconded, and approved by Swami Kripamayananda. All our members and friends are requested to attend the meeting. If you are unable to attend, please fill in the **proxy form** to be included in October 2009 newsletter and send it so that it reaches us **before November 22**.