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日本ヴェダンタ協会ニュースレター

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

November Calendar

Birthdays

Swami Subodhananda

Tuesday, 4 November

Swami Vijnanananda

Wednesday, 5 November

Swami Premananda

Sunday, 30 November

Kyokai Events

More Events on Page 8

• Bhagavad Gita • Lesson

Indian Embassy
Saturday, 1 Nov
14:00~16:30

• Study Classes •

1st & 3rd Tues
of Each Month with
Swami Medhasananda

'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'

• November • Zushi Retreat

Sunday, 16 November

10:30 ~ 16:30

- Morning Talk:

'Don't Look for God, See God!'

- Lunch Prasad
- Afternoon Session:

Himalayan Pilgrimage Report

All are welcome!

• Akhanda Japam •

Monday, 23 Nov

05:00 ~ 20:00

Contact Mr. Mitamura

090-7194-1274



✧ Thus Spake ✧

*"We are what our thoughts have made us; so take care about what you think.
Words are secondary. Thoughts live; they travel far."*

- Swami Vivekananda

*"Stop thinking about anything which is not your true self, for that is degrading
and productive of pain, and instead think about your true nature, which is bliss
itself and productive of liberation."*

- Adi Shankaraya

September Zushi Retreat

'Ideal Love'

A Talk by Swami Medhasananda

The desire to love and to be loved is universal. Everyone wants not only to love, but also to be loved. This is why as societies people marry, have children and families. What is the basis of this? The desire to love and to be loved. Without which there would be no need for societies or families. Our discussion today examines various aspects of this universal desire and discusses methods for spiritualising our human relationships to become examples of 'Ideal Love.'

Ordinary vs Ideal Love

There is ideal love and ordinary or normal love. What is ordinary love? It is love that is intense early on, but gradually wanes. In some cases it vanishes altogether. There are cases where love can continue through time. However, examples of love continuing at the same level are very rare indeed.

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Ideal Love (from page 1)

There is ideal love and ordinary or normal love. What is ordinary love? It is love that is intense early on, but gradually wanes. In some cases it vanishes altogether. There are cases where love can continue through time. However, examples of love continuing at the same level are very rare, indeed.

Love can also be pure or impure. Why? Love can also bring deep attachment from which many problems arise, such as jealousy, selfishness, expectation of return or quid pro quo. It is not pure love, it is ordinary love.

Levels of Love

Everyone loves, so we all have a connection to today's theme. First there are levels or kinds of love. For example a mother's love for her children; then the wife's love for her husband; one's love of family and one's love for relatives. There is also love of friends and colleagues at school or work. There is also the love between teachers and students, between guru and disciple.

There are many, many ways in which we express love. One's love for another may not be reflected or shown in the same way, but we all love. Some even love animals, as we love our pets.

There is yet another level or kind of love – this is the love between devotees and God.

Assessing Our State of Love

To understand 'ideal love' we must evaluate our current state of love. Understanding this is important, and to do so some introspection is required. We must check ourselves to assess our level of love. Why is it that I have troubles in my relationships? Why aren't my relationships working? What is wrong? How much of this is my responsibility? How can I improve my relationships? How can I remove impurities so that my love can grow and become pure?

This self-examination is important. Why? Because everyone makes others responsible when there is trouble in a relationship. 'He/She' caused the problems. 'I' am completely perfect.' With some introspection we would be able to immediately recognise where the responsibility lies and attend to it. If we cannot

understand the source of problems, we cannot fix them.

Introspection as Spiritual Practice

We must tidy up the altar of our heart; the internal altar. We will not know how messy our mind, our heart, our altar, is without self-reflection; without introspection. How big is my ego? How deep my jealousy? How selfish are my thoughts? Analysing and understanding this is so very important.

We may practice introspection during our time in meditation. Hence, our time devoted to meditation will naturally increase, since we cannot be introspective at work or in 5 minutes with our thoughts and actions running here and there. Realise that it is not possible to derive the benefits of meditation, one of which is introspection, unless we sit quietly and reflect. Much of the stress we deal with directly involves human relations. Introspection is necessary to improve ourselves and our relations with others. Again, we often want to change others, but we need to change ourselves.

We may feel our family relationships are running smoothly and we do not need self-reflection. But do these relationships lead to truth and enlightenment? We need to ask ourselves these questions periodically because realising the truth and getting enlightenment is the goal of life.

Assess Liking vs Loving

How to continue love in our relationships between husband and wife, parents and children and friend to friend. This is the challenge. Before we enter into relationships, we must give each some careful thought. We all have many relationships, both shallow or casual and close. Some we only meet occasionally and others are more frequent and even intimate. Casual acquaintances can be maintained with no more than polite conversation. Other, more intimate relationships are deeper and involve more interaction, more communication. These relationships have more effect upon us. Therefore it is important to reflect and distinguish casual acquaintances from friends; friendly relations from light relations.

We need to create some space between 'liking' and 'loving' others. Instant attractions often lead to big disasters later. Marriages from having 'fallen in love' often lead to falling
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Ideal Love (from page 2)

outs. In arranged marriages we can put some responsibility onto the parents, however in 'love marriages' the responsibility is all on the spouse. This is true in business as well. If you want to do business with someone, this relationship deepens and we must carefully observe the person with whom we hope to enter into a business relationship.

Considering Our Responsibilities

Next, is our responsibility in relationships and considering this beforehand. The women's role in having children and raising a family is even more important. After giving birth to children she may feel that constant care in raising a child, cooking and cleaning is a toil. What is the point of complaining of such things after marriage? So reflection and preparation beforehand are important, because without this, the problems that arise will affect the relationship. Young couples suddenly realise the practical problems facing them after marriage. So let's be aware of our responsibilities in making close relationships that are followed by marriage.

I have a story here to lighten our topic a little: An elderly couple in their 80s had a visitor of around the same age. The husband said to his wife, 'Darling! Please prepare some tea!' She did so and served the guest a cup of tea. The husband then said, 'Honey! Please bring some cookies, too!' So this continued throughout the visit, with the husband addressing his wife as Honey, Darling, Dearest, etc. Finally, the guest said to the husband when the wife was out of the room, 'This is surprising. After all these years of marriage such a deep relationship continues with such affectionate names!' Whispering, the elderly husband confessed, 'Oh, it's not that. After all these years, I just forgot her name!'

Now let us continue. We see that when one falls in love and marry, the romance usually declines after the marriage. On the other hand, with arranged marriages the romance may come after the marriage and then decline. In either case the challenge is to maintain a continuous loving relationship. This is the idea of 'ideal love.' Long ago mothers taught their daughters in the duties of a housewife; the cooking, sewing, child rearing, etc. These days such things are not taught and missing are not only these skills, but also the mental and emotional preparation passed on from mother to daughter. One should at least be prepared mentally for our responsibilities as a wife and husband before marriage.

Family Time & Communication

Another problem we see that there is less and less communication in human relationships. Since the advent of the cell phone and internet there is actually less communication between those under the same roof. We should make it a point to eat meals together with other members of the family as much as possible; take walks together; enjoy outings together; and very importantly, the husband should return from work whenever possible and share time with his family. I am afraid we do not see much of this attitude among Japanese men. This is completely different from the norm we see in India or America, where husbands want to return home immediately from work. In fact, if a Japanese husband makes an effort to return home whenever possible, the wife may wonder what problem he is facing at work. But one should consider that family time and communication between parents and children is formative and important.

Mutual Love, Respect & Appreciation

There must be a continual striving for mutual love, respect and appreciation between husbands and wives. One should express one's gratefulness for the good efforts of one's wife or husband. One must not take one's wife or husband for granted and feel, 'well that's her job' or 'that's just his duty.' Do not be like this, do not belittle your spouse. Always try to maintain love, respect and appreciation.

In fact, in all relationships, between parents and children, friends and colleagues there should be a show of appreciation. Why should Did not the parents also want the children to be born to them? If you love and respect and

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Ideal Love (from page 3)

show appreciation to others, they will show the same feelings toward you. So the starting point is us. We start by changing ourselves.

This 'mutual attitude' of love, respect and appreciation is a wonderful idea. If we have this attitude to our partner, our partner will have the same for us. Otherwise if we just complain my partner doesn't understand me, our relationship will only suffer more bitterness.

The Ego & Anger

Next is the ego. And what is the biggest, problematic factor in our human relationships? The answer is ego. We rarely consider our ego as a negative factor in relationships, but without introspection we not can understand the source of many problems is ourself, our ego.

Another is anger. Lots of problems stem from anger. The ego and anger are the biggest sources of problems in human relationships.

Subduing the Ego

How do we subdue our ego? Step one, put others before ourselves. Put others first. Egoism is to put oneself before others. We make ourselves the centre. This is ego and it comes from our body-consciousness, not from soul-consciousness which is our real nature. So practice putting others first to subdue the ego and watch the results. Our state of mind changes if we consider, 'How much do I give?' instead of, 'How much do I get?' Step two is to appreciate others and be grateful. The ego changes from me to you.

Another thing is to think about why another said such improper things to me. Our first reaction is to take offence. Don't respond in kind - that is only leads to more quarrelling and blaming. Rather, think about and try to understand why the person said what was said. If we try to understand under what circumstances certain things were said or done our anger will subside and we can judge others with more understanding and compassion. Such practice goes a long way in cementing an ideal relationship.

This happens to us all. We get angry with someone and regret it later when we learn more of the situation. It is by our own misunderstanding that we lose control.

Avoid strong liking and disliking. Don't be-

come like a cedar, be like a willow. A person with a strong ego has strong likes and dislikes. Good and stable human relationships are hard for such people. Cedars stand tall and straight. The problem is the cedar does not bend and breaks when strong winds blow. While the willow also grows tall and straight, it will bend with the winds. If we are too rigid, our relationships will suffer. On the other hand, if we are too flexible, a relationship becomes superficial.

Thou; Not I

Next, the idea is to repeat 'O Lord it is Thou, Not I.' Practicing this will eliminate the ego substantially. It is you Lord, not me. It is not my power or my talent. It is Yours. When engaged in physical labour and in need of power, we should consider where this power comes from. What is the source? It is food. It is sunlight and the soil which help in producing food, all of which are gifts from nature. I have a talent. Did I make this talent? Did I make my brain? No, it is all input from that which was before. If we consider this, we will put God first.

Sri Ramakrishna said he could enlighten and liberate and help anyone, even the greatest sinner, but a person with a big ego he said he could do nothing. Why? Because such a person puts himself, his ego, first, creating a barrier between himself and God. If we can control our ego, the control of our anger is easy and, finally, our patience grows, our understanding grows. As our patience grows, ego subsides. This is why we must make a constant effort to control our ego first.

The 5-Minute Pause

Another practice that will help is to not respond in anger for a while, say 5 minutes. Do not respond immediately. The biggest problem in most human relationships is that we retort too quickly. If I respond in anger, the other party will answer in anger and the situation becomes worse. Be quiet for at least 5 minutes. Have patience; think it through. Afterward you can address the issue with calmness and understanding.

At times, as a result of this 5 minutes of restraint you may come to think that the issue in question is not so important and decide not to respond at all and you will feel better for it. In my own experience, I have put this into practice from time to time and found it beneficial.

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Ideal Love (from page 4)

Change Myself First

Next is changing myself before changing others. We all have the same problem. We want others to change to our liking; husband wants the wife to change; wife wants husband to change; parents want sons and daughters to change their ways. But, finally, no one changes. This means we have to change ourselves before trying to change others.

Freedom & Control

Next is the balance between freedom and control. If you want freedom, give the other freedom too. We need to find balance; mutual balance between freedom and control.

Spiritualising Relationships

Then we need to raise the level of our relationships. We need to spiritualise relationships of those we love beyond the physical and mental. Extend our human relations beyond the level of communication between body and mind. We need to extend the level of our relationships with loved ones to the soul, the Atman. Why? Well, if you love a beautiful looking woman, suppose her physical beauty fades? If you love the beauty, the body, when the beauty fades, then love fades. If you love another's mind, as that mind changes, so does your love. The body and mind are always changing, they don't stay the same. What is at the base of unchanging love? The Atman.

So we have to raise our level of love for family and friends from the physical and mental to the spiritual. Why? Because the Self is changeless. Love will become deeper. So your relations should not only be secular, physical

and mental, they should also be spiritual.

In the Upanishads the sage Yajnavalkya says to his wife, Maitreyi, 'Do you know why the wife loves the husband and why the husband loves the wife?' He explains that the wife looking into the soul of the husband finds the same soul as she possesses; and the husband finds the soul of this wife is the same as his. This is the real basis of mutual love.

So an 'Ideal Love' is a love which is pure. What is the meaning of 'pure love?' It is love without attachment. Such attachments in love finally bring us sufferings, as it causes grief, frustration, jealousy and selfishness.

Extend the Boundaries of Love

Also, do not confine love only to one's family, but love others as well. Extend the boundaries of love. Then attachments will gradually subside. Also love those out of your family circle. Otherwise the focus of our love is confined to ourselves and the immediate circle of our family and friends and attachments will grow. Also love and serve those who are not directly related to you in whatever way you can.

This Shall Also Pass

'This shall also pass.' This is important and practical advice to remember in relationships. All human relationships will end one day. When it ends another begins. No matter how deep and important a relationship is, it will end. 'This shall also pass! This relationship will also end!' If we can remember that, then we will be free of attachments. Every relationship starts and ends in this life itself and does not go beyond it. Remembering this fact will help us to become free from all illusions and attachments and internally feel yet free. However it is only with God that our relationship is eternal.

Conclusion

To conclude, our points were that we should strive to extend our love from the physical and mental to the spiritual. Next, spiritualise our relationships. See God in the form of that person. Thirdly, extend the boundaries of our love. Fourth is to remember that 'this relationship too will come to an end.' Practicing these ideas will eliminate the obsessions of attachment and purify our love. We will raise the level of the love we share with others and we thus can cultivate 'Ideal Love.' •

NEWS BRIEFS (OUT OF TOWN) SEPTEMBER 2014

• **Satsanga in Sapporo** / 7 September

Organized by Ms. Miwako Tanabe, Ms. Yoko Sato & others. About 30 in attendance. Swami Medhasananda gave a discourse, 'Creating Better Human Relationships.' This was followed by a dinner and Q&A session.

• **Satsanga in Nagoya** / 13 September

Organized by Ms. Akemi Hanya this event was attended by about 25 people. Swami Medhasananda gave a talk on 'Inner Peace.'

• **Satsanga in Tajimi** / 14 September

Organized by Ms. Rie Ueno, about 25 people attended the talk Swami Medhasananda gave on 'Love and Attachment.'

• **Thought of the Month** •

"Everyone thinks of changing the world,
but no one thinks of changing himself."

- Leo Tolstoy

The Retreat began with several members accompanying an early visit to Kokeizan Eihoji Temple and riverside meditation.

Afterward they selected a tree-shaded park area to form a circle of prayer, chanting and singing. This group then posed for a photograph on the steps of the nearby temple, before enjoying a light breakfast.

Later, after attendees were seated, Swami narrated a slide show on Swami Vivekananda and gave his talk.

A smaller assembly later enjoyed lunch together.



Sapporo



Nagoya



Kokeizan Eihoji Temple

Tajimi Photos



Meditation



Group Chanting



Group Chanting



Group



Breakfast



Breakfast



Slide Show



'Love & Attachment'



Lunch

SPECIAL UPCOMING EVENTS FOR NOVEMBER 2014

November 1st (Saturday)
Bhagavad Gita lecture
Location: Embassy of India 14:00 to 16:30

November 2nd (Sunday)
Satsanga in Yamagata
Contact: Takahashi 023-645-3282

November 3rd (Nat'l Holiday)
Satsanga in Sendai
Contact: Miyako Sato 022-224-6479

November 4th (Tuesday)
Zushi Centre
Gospel Study Class

November 6th~10th Swami Visits Seoul

November 15th (Saturday)
Lecture in Tokyo Yoga Center

November 15th (Sat) and 29th (Sat)
Lectures at Meiji University
<<https://academy.meiji.jp/course/detail/2053>>

November 16th (Sunday)

Zushi regular meeting 10:30 to 16:30
Morning lecture theme:
'Don't Look for God, See God'
Afternoon: Himalayan pilgrimage report

November 18th (Tuesday)
Zushi Centre
Gospel Study Class

November 22nd (Saturday)
Kansai district Lecture 13:30 to 17:00
Location: Osaka Training Center
Study on Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads

November 23rd (National Holiday)
Akhandā-Japam 5:00 to 20:00
Contact: Mitamura 090-7194-1274

Akhandā Japam: We hold Special Japam and Meditation Days twice a year. Participants meditate one hour at a time continuously in silence creating a holy atmosphere. You can join in at a time convenient to you. Also it is easy for beginners. Meals are also served. Please contact Mr. Mitamura with your preferred times of participation.

• A Story to Remember •

NATURE

A lecturer explained how a fraction of the enormous sums spent on arms in the modern world would solve all the material problems of every member of the human race. The inevitable reaction of the disciples after the lecture was: "But why are human beings so stupid"?

"Because", said the Master solemnly, "people have learned to read printed books. They have forgotten the art of reading unprinted ones".

"Give us an example of an unprinted book".

But the Master wouldn't give one.

One day, in response to their persistence, he said: "The songs of birds, the sounds of insects are all trumpeting forth the Truth. The grasses and the flowers are all pointing out the Way. Listen! Look! That is the way to read"!

Fr. Anthony de Mello

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