



OCTOBER 2023 -VOLUME 21 NUMBER 10

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN



Thus Spake

Too much study of the scriptures does more harm than good. The important thing is to know the essence of the scriptures. After that, what is the need of books? One should learn the essence and then dive deep in order to realize God.

- Sri Ramakrishna

Only through work can one remove the bondage of work. Total detachment comes later. One should not be without work even for a moment. Work helps one to fend off idle thoughts.

- Sri Sarada Devi

As in a river the masses of water are changing before you every moment, and new masses are coming, yet taking similar form, so is it with this body." Yet the body must be kept strong and healthy. It is the best instrument we have.

- Swami Vivekananda

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Monthly Program Schedule

for

NOVEMBER 2023

12th (Sun)

Kali Puja

19:00 ~ 21:30

Livestreaming

22nd (Wed)

Weekly Upanishad Study Class

8:30 ~ 9:30

Zoom (Japanese Only)

25th (Sat)

Bhagavad Gita Study Class in Osaka

14:30 ~ 16:30

(Japanese Only)

28th (Tue)

Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna Study Class

14:00 ~ 16:00

Livestream and Zoom (Japanese Only)

The Life and Teachings of Sri Krishna

By Swami Divyanathananda

As you know, today we are celebrating the birthday of Sri Krishna, although the actual birthday of Sri Krishna will come in the next month. Many of you know about Sri Krishna and the divine play that He enacted during His lifetime. Let me narrate a brief outline of his life.

There are some differences in opinions regarding the year of birth of Sri Krishna. Anyways, Mathura, the kingdom where he was born, was ruled by a tyrant king called Kamsa. Kamsa's father Ugrasena was actually the king, but because Kamsa wanted to become the king, he put his father in prison and himself became the king. Kamsa had a sister called Devaki. During the wedding ceremony of Devaki and Vasudeva there was a prophecy from the sky that the eighth child of Devaki and Vasudeva would kill Kamsa. When Kamsa heard this, he threw both of them into a prison. His intention was, the moment the eighth child would be born, he would kill him.

Finally the eighth child was born. As he was the son of Vasudeva, he was named Vāsudeva. Immediately after being born, He addressed his parents and said, 'Oh Father and Mother! don't grieve any more, I shall free you from the tyranny of Kamsa. Father, your friend Nanda lives in another village, Gokul. Carry me to his house, there Nanda's wife has given birth to a girl child. You exchange me with her'. After his advice, the gates of the prison opened by themselves and the gatekeepers fell asleep. It was raining all night. Anyways, Vasudeva carried the child as directed, reached the house of Nanda at Gokula and saw Yashoda sleeping with the newly born girl child. Secretly, Vasudeva exchanged that girl child with his own and came back to the prison, carrying the girl child in his arms.

Thus, Krishna grew up in the house of Nanda and Yashoda. We hear of several anecdotes recorded in Srimad Bhagavatam about the divine sports he played as a child and also as a young boy. He killed several demons. There are stories of his sports with the milkmaids and the cowherd boys. When he grew up, He and his Brother Balaram killed Kamsa, the tyrant king, and restored his father Ugrasena to the throne. Later, Sri Krishna moved to western India to a place called Dwaraka. He established his kingdom there and was the ruler of the Yadavas. Later in the war of Kurukshetra, which was fought between Kauravas and Pandavas, He decided not to fight, however, at the request of Arjuna, he became the charioteer of Arjuna. Though there were great warriors on both the sides, still Sri Krishna helped the Pandavas by giving timely advice many times. Finally the Pandavas won the battle of Kurukshetra.

Before the war began, Arjuna declined to fight the battle as he saw among the opponents several of his relatives, other near and dear ones, his teacher, and many dignitary warriors whom he respected from his heart, for he was afraid that if he would fight the war, many of them would be killed. It is on that occasion, to urge him to do his duty of the Kshatriyas, Sri Krishna gave him a long discourse, which came to be known as the Bhagavad Gita. After the battle of Kurukshetra was over, many tyrant kings and wicked minded people who had taken the side of Kauravas were killed. The eldest of the Pandavas, Yudhisthira practiced the path of righteousness under all circumstances even though they were put into great trouble. After the war, Yudhisthira was made the king. In that way, the mission of Sri Krishna, that is 'protection of religion and destruction of evil' was materialised.

Now He felt that since the principal mission of His life was fulfilled, He could give up His body. In the meanwhile, his own kinsmen, the Yadavas, became very turbulent. They fought amongst each other and perished. Sri Krishna, did not intervene and allowed this to happen.

After this, He was ready to leave the earth. One day, as he was resting under a tree, a hunter by mistake hit his legs with an arrow from a distance. Sri Krishna calmly accepted this and after a few days, left His mortal body.

Now let us consider His teachings. Sri Ramakrishna said that the great religious leaders taught their disciples according to their capacity. They didn't give the same advice or same teachings to all the disciples. They always took into consideration the aptitude, ability and capacity of each disciple and guided them.

Among the devotees, Sri Krishna had three types of devotees. The Pandavas were one type, Uddhava was another type, who had great interest in spiritual life and would undertake spiritual practices earnestly. The third type were the cowherd boys and the milkmaids of Vrindaban. If we study the nature of them, we find that the Pandavas had predominantly Rajas but also some element of Sattva. The second type had predominance of Sattva, who would intensely undertake spiritual practices, like Uddhava. He was Sri Krishna's relative, friend and devotee. The third type, the cowherd boys and milkmaids were endowed with pure sattva. It was not mixed with Rajas or Tamas.

Now, let us see what were His teachings to the Pandavas, who were predominantly of Rajasik type. In the Bhagavad Gita, we find the teachings for them. When Sri Krishna found Arjuna, grief stricken, and having decided not to participate in the battle seeing his relatives on the other side, he gave him this advice:

क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते |

क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्त्वोत्तिष्ठ परन्तप |

O Partha, it does not befit you to yield to this unmanliness. Give up such petty weakness of heart and arise, O vanquisher of enemies.

Sri Krishna asked Arjuna to fight the war as a duty of the kshatriyas. But He also advised Arjuna to keep in mind two things while performing his duties. The first thing is to remain unattached to the fruits of the efforts. In the Bhagavad Gita there is another verse about unattachment.

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर |

असक्तो ह्याचरन्कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः ||

Therefore, giving up attachment, perform actions as a matter of duty because by working without being attached to the fruits, one attains the Supreme.

Attachment to work begets several problems, like frustration, disappointment and similar negative emotions. So, His advice was to carry on one's duty while remaining unattached. He also advised repeatedly, that while carrying on one's duty, you remember Me constantly. There is another verse in the Bhagavad Gita:

तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च ।

मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्मा मे वैष्यस्य संशयम् ॥

Therefore, always remember Me and also do your duty of fighting the war. With mind and intellect surrendered to Me, you will definitely attain Me; of this, there is no doubt.

Although this verse was told in backdrop of a war or battle, in the case of an average human being, carrying on one's life is no less than a war amidst so much trouble and difficulties outside. So, amidst all these conflicting situations, let us do our duty, at the same time remembering God. About the results, Sri Krishna's advice is, irrespective of whether we have success or failure, let us offer both to the Lord. There is a verse in the Bhagavad Gita:

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।

यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम् ॥

Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer as oblation to the sacred fire, whatever you bestow as a gift, and whatever austerities you perform, O son of Kunti, do them as an offering to Me.

Then the most important advice that he gives, which appears in the last chapter of the Bhagavad Gita. Chapter 18, Verse 66.

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।

अहं त्वां सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

Abandon all varieties of dharmas and simply surrender unto Me alone. I shall liberate you from all sinful reactions; do not fear.

Now let us discuss the instructions that Sri Krishna gave to Uddhava. They have found place in Srimad Bhagavatam and this portion of the Bhagavatam is known as Uddhava Gita. Uddhava was not a householder. He was a kind of recluse who was greatly inclined to lead a spiritual life. Uddhava sought the advice of Sri Krishna about spiritual life and in order to instruct him, Sri Krishna narrated him the story of an Avadhuta. Avadhuta was a type of mendicant. Monks in India, who give up their family and profession for the purpose of devoting solely to spiritual practices are indicated by different names, for example, sadhu, sannyasin, avadhuta, etc.

You know, there is *Guru* and there is *Upaguru* too. *Guru* is one who gives us spiritual instructions. *Upagurus* are subsidiary spiritual teachers, from whom one can learn about spiritual life. This Avadhuta had twenty- four such upagurus. It is an interesting story. Avadhuta said, 'I learned forgiveness from earth. We dig the earth for getting water, for extracting minerals, for constructing buildings. But Mother Earth does not object and allows us to do so'.

Then he said, 'I learnt unattachment from air. Air carries both good smell and bad smell, but it is unaffected'. Then he said, 'though air can be limited by roof, etc. but space is all-

pervading. In the same way, the Atman also is all pervading, but it appears to be limited by body, mind, ego, etc'. So he had learnt this aspect of all-pervasiveness from space.

'What did I learn from water? Water is by nature transparent, tastes sweet and cleans dirt. In the same way, sages also have a transparent mind and help clean the impurities of other persons by their teachings'.

Then comes fire. 'What did I learn from fire? Dirty things cannot pollute fire. In the same way, in case of a man who is full of knowledge and wisdom, evil company cannot contaminate him'.

'The moon, waxes and wanes. Actually, it remains the same it neither waxes nor wanes. It is because of the reflection of the sun on the moon, it appears to wax and wane. In the same way the body grows and becomes old and finally dies. But the Atman remains the same, irrespective of the body's condition. This phenomenon I have learnt from the moon'.

'Now comes the Sun. What did I learn from the sun? It helps evaporate the water from rivers, seas and other bodies of water. Thus, clouds are formed, and we get rain. But the Sun itself is not affected by this process. In the same way, for the man with wisdom, he learns many things and shares his knowledge with others. But when he learns and teaches, he doesn't become egoistic. He doesn't become egoistic due to his learning'.

'Also, I learned from the sun that when there are reflections of the sun on various water bodies, each water body will have a reflection of the sun on it. Ignorant persons will think that there are many suns. Secondly, when there is reflection of the sun on a pond or a river, due to wind, there are waves and the reflection will get disturbed. But the Sun is the same, there is no disturbance in the sun. In the same way, the Atman, after coming in contact with buddhi, the mind, and the senses, appears to be affected and so we think there are many Atmans. But it is not so. Atman is always one'.

Then this Avadhuta learned from a family of pigeons. Once a hunter spread a net to catch those pigeons. The offsprings were caught and could not get out. When the mother bird saw this, she was so much attached to her offsprings that she couldn't hold herself back and surrendered herself to the net. The Father also, in the same way, felt so much attached to the family that he also entered the net. This example showed, how attachment leads to one's downfall.

Then the Avadhuta said 'I learnt from the insect that insects are drawn to the fire by its beauty. It gets into the fire and dies. In the same way, men are attracted to women and when they come in contact with each other, it leads to bondage'.

'What I learnt from the elephant is, the touch of the female elephant binds the male elephant. When the hunters want to hunt a wild elephant, they take a pet female elephant and send it to the jungle. The female elephant interlocks the trunk of the male elephant with its own trunk and drags him slowly near the trap put by the hunter. Then the hunters catches the elephant.

So one should be careful of touch. So here the sense of touch became a source of trouble for the male elephant and this touch can bring trouble for a spiritual aspirant too!’ This is the important point.

‘Then I learnt from Bees also. Bees collect honey from flowers and make beehives. So professional people who collect honey, do not directly poke those beehives. It is dangerous and by the bite of the bees, one may get killed also. So what those people do is, they burn wood and make smoke. The bees cannot tolerate the smoke, so they run away. Then the professional people collect honey from the beehives. So what I learnt is, the bees worked so much to collect honey, but they cannot enjoy it, it is taken by some other people. In the same way, greedy persons and misers also save money, but they do not enjoy the money for themselves or for their family members’.

‘Then I learnt from deer about the sense of ear. Deer are fond of sweet sounds. Hunters know this. They play flutes of different kinds and deer not knowing the source of this music go towards the sound. So when they come near the flute player, the hunters trap them. In the same way, those who have taken the life of renunciation, should not listen to secular music, for this may kindle in them the desire for enjoyment’.

‘I also learnt that if you have any object of enjoyment with you, people around will want to snatch it away from you. A kite took a piece of meat and started flying. Other birds like crows followed the kite and wanted to snatch away the meat from the mouth of the kite. While flying, suddenly the piece of meat fell from the kite’s mouth. Then the crows left the kite alone and went towards the meat to grab it. Then finally the kite had peace’.

In this way, there are several examples. All these can be found in Uddhava Gita. There is a beautiful verse in the Uddhava Gita

Dehasthohapi na dehashtho vidwan swapnad yatotthitah
Adehasthohapi dehashtha kumati swapnadrik yatha 1.02

One who is enlightened in self-realization, although living within the material body, sees himself as transcendental to the body, just as one who has arisen from a dream gives up identification with the dream body. A foolish person, however, although not identical with his material body but transcendental to it, thinks himself to be situated in the body, just as one who is dreaming sees himself as situated in an imaginary body.

When Sri Krishna felt that his mission on this earth was over, he wanted to give up his body. When Uddhava heard this, he felt very sad, for he was Sri Krishna’s devotee. He also wanted to give up his body as he wanted to be with Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna told him, ‘No Uddhava, do not do that. After my passing away, go to the Himalayas in a place called Badrikashram, make a place for yourself near the river Alakananda and perform spiritual practices. Control your mind, detach yourself from everything that is unreal and focus on Me’. This type of advice was given to those devotees who wanted to devote their life only to

spiritual practices. Uddhava was of that category. For them, there was no other secular duty to perform.

The third type of devotees were the milkmaids of Vrindavan. Once Swami Premanandaji went to East Bengal and was giving a talk. In the middle of his talk, one member of the audience got up and said, 'Maharaj, please tell us something about Prema Bhakti- Pure devotion.' Maharaj at first did not pay heed to that person and without stopping, continued his talk. That person again said the same thing. This time Premananda became a bit excited and said, "You want to know about Prema Bhakti? Well, I shall tell you an anecdote. A person was selling things from door to door. He was a hawker. He yelled, Prema bhakti! Prema bhakti is on sale! Do you want Prema Bhakti? Is there any customer? One prospective customer came out, and said, 'Yes, I want Prema Bhakti. What is the price'? The hawker said, 'your chopped off head'. Our head is the price for getting pure love. If you want Prema Bhakti, you will have to give your head. I am afraid that none of you are fit to possess divine love. For getting divine love, one should be ready to give one's head. Meaning the idea of 'me' and 'mine'. Then the audience kept quiet. The significance of this anecdote is that once you are completely free of your ego, Prema bhakti will manifest.

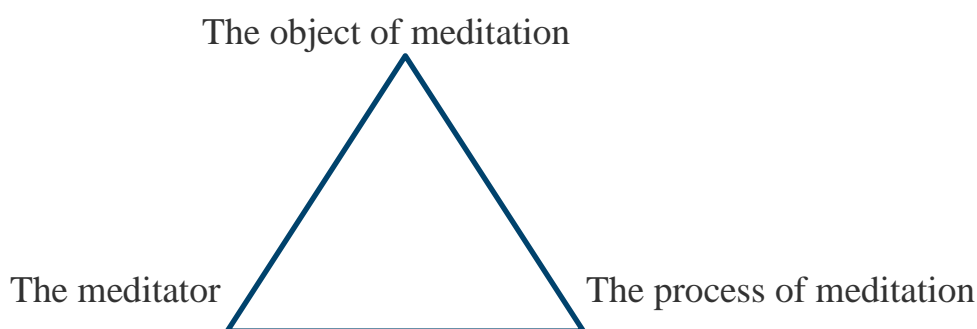
Srimad Bhagavatam depicts the love of the milkmaids towards Sri Krishna and Sri Krishna's love for the milkmaids. Swami Vivekananda said, secular minded people, who have body-mind idea, should not even read those texts. Because they won't be able to appreciate the deeper significance of these texts. There are songs which depicts the pang of separation of Radha and Krishna. This is called *Viraha* in Sanskrit. There are kirtans which depict this *viraha*. When they are sung, many people shed tears hearing them. However, Swami Vivekananda said, they weep not for Krishna or Radha. They remember their own spouse and weep. Male people imagine themselves as Krishna and superimpose the character of Radha on their wife and that is why they weep. And certainly, the relationship between husband and wife is not spiritual, but secular. Thus, the milkmaids were of a very pure type. They were devoid of body consciousness.

There are three types of Love: Ekangi, Samanjasā and Samarthā. The first type seeks happiness only for oneself. The second type seeks happiness for oneself and also for the other person who is being loved. And the third type doesn't seek happiness for oneself at all, but the happiness of the person who is being loved. Devotees also fall under this category. A person of the first category worships God for fulfilling his own desires. However, there are superior type of devotees, who love God only for the sake of love. Their motive is to please the Lord. The milkmaids belonged to this category. They didn't have any desire, not even freedom. Their only motive was to serve Krishna. It is said that after they die, they still live in their subtle body and they live at the feet of Krishna, to protect His feet from pricking by thorny bushes.

During those days, the people around would wonder, why Sri Krishna loves the milkmaids so much! In order to give a reply to them, Sri Krishna did a trick. He fell ill. Doctors were consulted, but none could cure him. The devotees treating him felt, 'let us ask Sri Krishna himself, how can he be cured.' Accordingly, they asked Him directly. Sri Krishna answered

that if the dust of the feet of the milkmaids would be placed on His head, He would get cured. Everybody was surprised to hear of His answer. And they wondered, how can one do so! Because everybody covet the dust of His feet, since He was the Lord Himself. He was so much revered and adored! Hence, it was unthinkable for one to take dust of the feet of another person and put it on Sri Krishna's head. However, when the milkmaids heard of this, they immediately agreed to take the dust of their own feet and put it on the head of Sri Krishna, for if that is the only medicine that could cure Him, they would not hesitate to do so! This demonstrated the extent of the love they had for Sri Krishna. This is called pure Love! Shuddhā Bhakti! It is very very rare. One may have devotion or Bhakti, but pure, unalloyed love is indeed rare.

What happens, when one attains pure devotion? Let me explain this like this: There is a concept of a triangle in all paths. In the method of Yoga, it is the process of Meditation, the meditator, and the object of meditation.



Similarly, in the practice of Jnana Yoga, The Jivatman, Paramatman and the process of discrimination- these are the three corners of the triangle. In the very same way, in the process of devotion, the devotee, his chosen ideal and the process of devotion are the three corners of the triangle. Now, in case of Nirvikalpa samadhi, the Jivatman, the process of discrimination and Paramatman become one. In the same way, in Bhakti Yoga also, the devotee, the chosen ideal and the process of devotion become one. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, when the Gopis experienced para bhakti, they used to feel 'We are Sri Krishna' that is, their own I consciousness would merge into Sri Krishna. He also used to say that when a devotee attains that much devotion, then he in a sense gets possession of the rope with which he can tie God. Whenever he wants, God appears before him. For ordinary devotees after undergoing spiritual practices for a long time and if God is graceful, one may get the vision of God, but when one attains para bhakti then any moment and anywhere God appears before the devotee. Because the Lord is so much attracted by pure devotion! That is why, the Holy Mother said, 'If I want, any moment I can get the vision of Sri Ramakrishna'. She had that much love for Him.

So, we can conclude that Sri Krishna had three kinds of devotees. The first type were the householders, who have many secular duties in life. Pandavas were of that type. For them, Sri Krishna's advice was to carry on with their secular duties, while keeping their mind fixed on God. They were advised to undertake their duties in an unattached way, surrendering the fruits of their actions to God. The second type were those who wanted liberation and were

willing to undertake intense spiritual practices. Uddhava belonged to that category. Sri Krishna's advice to them was to control their mind, practice discrimination and also to focus on God. The third type had the highest type of love. For them there was no advice. Only communion between the Devotee and the Lord.

Concluding Remarks

By Swami Medhasananda on 3rd June 2023

Dear Friends,

My hearty congratulations to all of the distinguished speakers of this session who skillfully presented Swami Vivekananda's concepts of various yogas along with their own observations within the specified time, which was however not an easy task.

Now I would like to say a few words on today's topic.

Yoga is both the goal and method of a divine, or in another word, an ideal life. Each Yoga, practised according to one's aptitude and ability, leads to the same goal. One of the famous utterances of Swami Vivekananda is as follows: 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within, by controlling nature-external and internal. Do this either by work or worship or philosophy- by one, or more or all of these and become free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or dogmas, or rituals or books or temples or forms are but secondary details.'

During his second visit to the West in 1899, Swamiji spoke specifically about the synthesis of yogas, which was his unique contribution to the ideas and practices of Yoga. He said, 'Would to God, that all men were so constituted that in their minds all these elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion and of work were equally present in full! That is the ideal of a perfect man'. Synthesis of all the four yogas was also Vivekananda's ideal of religion.

He also devised a visual representation of this synthesis of Yoga through a logo which was later made the emblem of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission and is widely known to the common people. Story of Swamiji's devising of this logo is interesting and is narrated below:

In one July morning of 1900, during his second visit to the USA, Swamiji was sitting at the breakfast table at the newly founded Vedanta Society of New-York. At that time a printer named Henry Van Hagen appeared there. He said he was making a circular for the Vedanta Society and wished to have an emblem to go into it. Could the Swami suggest something? Swamiji took the envelope from a letter he had just received, tore it open, and on the clean inner surface drew the Waves, the Swan, the Lotus and the Sun, circled by a Serpent. He threw the bit of paper with the design on it across the table and said, 'Draw it to scale' Henry, the printer, was also an able draftsman. He converted the rough sketch into a finished drawing.

Apparently, Swamiji did the drawing of the emblem representing the synthesis of prominent Yogas casually, but actually the idea of it was working in his mind for a very long time. Urgency of making a circular prompted to materialise it.

Vivekananda himself explained the Logo in the following language: the wavy waters in the picture are symbolic of Karma; the lotus of Bhakti; and the rising Sun of Jnana; the encircling serpent is indicative of Yoga and the awakened Kundalini shakti, while the swan in the picture stands for the Paramatman (Supreme Self). Therefore, the idea of the picture is that by the union of Karma, Bhakti, Jnana and Yoga, vision of the Paramatman (Supreme Self) is obtained.

The Logo also has an inscription at its bottom: तन्नो हंसः प्रचोदयात् (Tanno Hansah Prachodayat) meaning 'May the Paramatman, the Supreme Self (symbolised by the Swan) awaken our higher understanding.'

Let me remind you that Swamiji's concept of an ideal man is a person who can synthesise all the four yogas in his life. Swamiji planned the daily schedule of our ashramas, that is, centres of the Ramakrishna Order founded by him, in such a way that all these four yogas are practised by their monastic inmates so that they can harmoniously develop themselves and become ideal monks.

Hence, in the day-to-day life of our ashramas we practice Raja Yoga through meditation, Bhakti Yoga through prayer and rituals, Jnana Yoga through study of scriptures and cultivation of discrimination and finally, Karma Yoga by trying to perform work as an instrument of the Lord and work in an unselfish way. These help us to make our spiritual practice easy and interesting and finally lead us to the way of perfection.

Let me conclude with the hope that the householders take a cue from the above discussion on a perfect life and how the synthesis of Yogas would help to attain it and practice accordingly. Hence dear Friends, you may do a little bit of meditation (Raja Yoga) and prayer (Bhakti Yoga) and study some scriptures (Jnana Yoga) for example, the Bhagavad Gita for a while, say for about thirty minutes everyday. Also work with an attitude of giving more and taking less (Karma Yoga). Just practise these for two weeks and you yourself will realize the benefit of it. Consequently, such practices will convert your home into an ashrama: 'Griham Tapovanam'. Thus a life of stress, fear, disharmony and peacelessness will be transformed into a life of abiding serenity and joy.

Thank you.

• Thought of the Month •

You must not throw cold water on anybody's project. Give up criticism altogether. Help all as long as you find they are doing all right, and in cases where they seem to be going wrong, show them their mistakes gently. It is criticising each other that is at the root of all mischief. That is the chief factor in breaking down organisations.

- Swami Vivekananda

• Story to Remember •

A Reunion Story

A small boy was once playing with his father on the seashore. His father was helping him build a sand castle. Suddenly a strange object attracted the boy's attention and he ran to grab it. But the nearer he went, the farther the object receded. On and on he ran, but the object appeared to recede faster than ever before.

Tired, the boy stopped after a while. He remembered his father and looked back. How far he had come! He lost interest in the chase and ran back to the place where he was building his castle. He was shocked to find nothing there. No castle—and even, no father.

Before he knew it, his eyes were filled with tears and he began to sob. “Father, father! Where are you? Where are you?”

Only the sound of the waves answered the call in a language no one could understand. Slowly the sun went down and it was dark. The boy knew not where to go. There was not a soul to be seen anywhere. “Where is my father? Why did he leave me all alone? Where has he disappeared?”—slowly sleep overtook the boy and he lay down on the sand.

Before long he felt a tap on his shoulder. A kindly touch. He stared. In the dark an imposing figure stood by his side—and old man with a beard and shining eyes. He took the little boy's hand in his and said, “Come, child, come. Don't you want to go to your father? Come, come.”

The boy liked this person. Something attracted him, as it were. Was it the old man's sparkling eyes? His loving smile? The aura of peace and joy that surrounded him?

“Will you really take me to my father?” the boy asked, although he had already begun following the old man. The man said nothing. He gave the boy an assuring smile and pressed his hands.

It appeared to be an excruciatingly long walk. And then, all of a sudden, the boy found himself standing at his doorsteps. Excited, he knocked on the door as loudly as he could. The door opened—and there stood his father.

“Father, father, I am here!” the boy said excitedly. The father picked him up in his arms and began showering him with kisses.

Surprisingly enough, the old man was nowhere to be seen. Even more astonishing was the fact that the boy felt no need to search for him. The boy had discovered something. No sooner did he see his father than he realized that his father himself had come disguised as the old man. It was all a part of the game which the father wanted to play with the child.

Sri Ramakrishna said, “God himself comes to us disguised as our Guru.”

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