



JUNE 2023 -VOLUME 21 NUMBER 06

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN



Thus Spake

The foolish man conceives the idea of 'self.' The wise man sees there is no ground on which to build the idea of 'self;' thus, he has a right conception of the world and well concludes that all compounds amassed by sorrow will be dissolved again, but the truth will remain.

- Lord Buddha

In India they tell me I ought not to teach Advaita Vedanta to the people at large; but I say, I can make even a child understand it. You cannot begin too early to teach the highest spiritual truths.

- Swami Vivekananda

The self that is contained in the organic system is only a 'convenient provisional delusion'. When you set it aside, you begin to expand your concept of self. You feel spiritual oneness with others. So, whatever work I do, the fruits of it are not for me alone; it will go to all. And a state will come, when there will be nothing of 'I' left; everything will be 'we'. We lose ourselves in the universal.

- Swami Ranganathananda

In this Issue:

- Thus Spake page 01
- Monthly Program Schedule page 02
- What is Common to all the Yogas Part 2 by Swami Medhasananda page 03
- Tales and Parables of Gautam Buddha by Swami Divyanathananda page 07
- Buddha Celebration Report page 13
- Lonnie san's Ceremony page 13
- Some Photographs from the Monthly Retreat in May page 14
- Story to Remember page 15

Monthly Program Schedule for JULY 2023

1st (Sat)

Bhagavad Gita Study Class at the Indian Embassy

10:30 ~ 12:00 (In Japanese only)

Video uploaded later

4th (Tue)

Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna Study Class

14:30 ~ 16:30 (in Japanese only), Zoom

12th (Wed)

Weekly Upanishad Study Class

8:30 ~ 9:30 (in Japanese only), Zoom

16th (Sun)

Monthly Retreat at Zushi

10:30 ~ 16:30

Bilingual Live Streaming

Speaker: Swami Medhasananda

26th (Wed)

Weekly Upanishad Study Class

8:30 ~ 9:30 (in Japanese only), Zoom

29th (Sat)

Bhagavad Gita Study Class in Osaka

14:30 ~ 16:30 (In Japanese only)

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What is Common to All Yogas

Swami Medhasananda

(Continued from the previous issue ...)

In scriptures it is mentioned that spiritual realization is not possible in one life, two to three lives may be necessary. But in the anecdote which we have read just now, from the teachings of Buddha, it has been mentioned that spiritual realization is possible in just seven days. But the condition is, one must continue on the theme of meditation. So, this monk tried, but after a few minutes his concentration was broken.

It once happened that Swami Adbhutanandaji, who used to meditate at the room at Dakshineswar for a long time, one day got up quite early from his meditation. Sri Ramakrishna, asked him, 'What is the matter? Why did you get up so early today?' Lata Maharaj replied, 'Today I was thinking, if I get the vision of Mother Kali, what boon should I ask of from her, and this thought was coming to my mind again and again and I was finding it difficult to concentrate.' Then Sri Ramakrishna said, 'No, you must not cherish any such desire while meditating.' So even a slight desire is an obstacle to concentration. In the anecdote which was read from the teachings of Buddha a few minutes ago, the teacher suggested that seven days of meditation is enough for getting realisation. However, perhaps just one day of unbroken thought of God will enable one to have a glimpse of spiritual realisation.

It happened that a young man had seen a movie on Lord Buddha, where it was shown that Buddha sat in meditation, and he had enlightenment. But he had practised meditation for 10 years whereas the movie was just for 2~3 hours! Then after seeing this movie, the young man thought, 'Let me meditate. I too shall be able to have enlightenment soon.' After trying to meditate, he fell into sleep after 20~25 minutes. His hope of quick enlightenment was nipped in the bud. Therefore, in spiritual life, there is nothing like long jumps and high jumps. One has to follow prescribed steps of spiritual practices one after another for a long period of time.

To come back to our topic today, although detailed descriptions of each of the Yogas are there, but the idea of combining these Yogas is not seen in any scripture. So, we can say that this was a unique contribution of Swami Vivekananda to the theory and practices of Yoga. And in this scheme of combining, one need not go to the extreme of each of the Yogas but can take parts from each Yoga according to one's capability and aptitude. Moreover, if an aspirant does one yoga to the exclusion of all the others, the practice may also become monotonous. That's why it becomes interesting when one combines the different Yogas. And one can have the highest realisation by that. But one must follow them till the last, with devotion and faith.

I have seen many senior monks in our Order, who did not do severe spiritual practices, but by just following the schedule laid down by Swamiji in the Ramakrishna Order, their spirituality was outstanding. If one tries to do meditation exclusively, for a long time, he may start thinking

of secular things or he may fall asleep as very few are prepared for such practice. Moreover, most of the people who are leading a busy life can't afford to spend long hours for meditation. So, for most of us, combination of various Yogas is safe and feasible.

Now an interesting question is, what is common to all the Yogas? All religions declare that human life is a great gift of God. Hindu scriptures say that after many many births, we are fortunate to get a human birth. One shouldn't misuse this rare opportunity of being born as a human being, rather one must utilise this human life. And when we compare an animal and human beings, we can understand how the human birth is so special. Animals live only for sense gratification: eating, sleeping, and procreating.

Then humans can develop themselves, which animals can't. And humans can develop themselves to that extent that they can realise the Supreme Self and thereby attain fulfilment in life. All these gifts are special. Moreover, from the secular point of view, human beings can invent something new. Although many animals too have intelligence, but that is not innovative intelligence. Unlike human beings, animals have no ability to discriminate between morality and immorality, between what is spiritual and what is secular. So, when we as human beings have all these gifts but don't use them, it is a great loss.

It is mentioned in the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, that Ramachandra once said to his brother Lakshmana, 'The elephant is so huge, but it cannot think of God.' Shankaracharya too has mentioned that these three things— human life, desire for realisation of God, and Holy company— are difficult to get and one gets them by only God's grace.

The second thing common to all Yogas is that all of them say that the realisation of the Supreme Self is the purpose of life. Then the third common factor is, though the methods are different, the result is the same, i.e., all the knots of the heart are cut asunder and one becomes fearless, one becomes full of joy and peace and highest knowledge and freedom are attained.

Then another thing that is common to all Yogas is that they all lay importance to practice. No Yoga says that just by listening or reading a scripture one will progress spiritually. So whatever Yoga one follows, one must put it into practice. Practice for a long time, without break.

Nowadays, there are a lot of talks available online in places such as YouTube. And people can easily access them and listen to them. But if we listen just for enjoying, then nothing worthwhile will happen. It is good to listen to spiritual talks, but one should contemplate on what one hears and put them into practice. Moreover, there is one danger of listening too much to such talks without going through the primary sources.

Thus, practice is important. If you keep a glass of milk in front of you and say 'butter, butter, butter', butter will not appear in front of you. To get butter, you will have to turn the milk to curd and then churn it to extract butter. Now the question is, what to practice. There are so many things, but only two one should focus on: The first and the most important thing is

purification of heart. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: चित्तशुद्धि (chitta shuddhi). There is a book called Concordance to the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. I was checking as to how many times this expression –purification of the heart – appeared in the Gospel, and I found that it is mentioned 15 to 16 times.

Jesus also said, in the parable: If the ground is not prepared, if it is full of thorny bush and rocks, then however good the seed which is sown, we cannot reap good crops. It is symbolic. What Jesus implied through this parable is, purification of heart. Without that, whatever spiritual practices we undertake, they will not yield results. So, all Yogas give great importance to purification of heart.

What does it mean by purification of heart? In the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, there is a story. In a certain village, there lived a child and he had to pass through a forest to attend school. The child used to be afraid of going through the forest all alone, and one day he complained to his mother about this. The mother said, ‘Don’t worry my boy, your elder brother Madhusudan is there in the forest. Whenever you are afraid, call him.’

So following advice of his mother, whenever the child would pass through the jungle, he would call Madhusudan *dada* (elder brother), and He would appear and escort him to school. Everyday this would happen. Once, there was a ceremony in the house of the child’s teacher. And the teacher asked each pupil to bring food offerings for that ceremony according to their means. This child was quite poor and asked his mother for the food offerings. The Mother did not have anything, and simply told the child to ask for the offering from Madhusudan *dada*. When the child met Madhusudan *dada*, he asked him to help with some food offerings to be taken to the teacher’s house for the ceremony. Madhusudan *dada* gave him a small earthen pot containing yogurt.

After the child reached the teacher’s house and gave that small pot to the teacher, the teacher became very angry, because it was such an insignificant looking small pot of yogurt. But the child said, ‘my Madhusudan *dada* has said, the moment you empty the pot, it will become full again. The teacher did so and surprisingly the moment all the curd was poured into another container, the small earthen pot became full again. This happened several times.

Then the teacher became eager to see child’s Madhusudan *dada*. He asked the child to accompany him to the forest. When they arrived there, the child started calling Madhusudan *dada*, but he didn’t appear. The child called again and again, and even then, when Madhusudan *dada* did not come, the child started crying. Then a voice was heard, which said, ‘Your mind is pure, that’s why you could see me, but the mind of your teacher is not yet pure, so he is not ready to have my vision.’

The point here is: चित्तशुद्धि (chitta shuddhi), purification of mind. God is the nearest of the near for all of us. But we can’t see God because our mind is not pure. Then another example of the mirror is also cited. If the glass of the mirror is clean, then we can see our face, but if dirt is

accumulated on it, we can't see ourselves. Another example is water in a lake. If the water is dirty, one cannot see the bottom. To see the bottom of the lake there should be two conditions. First, it should be clean and calm, that is without any waves. But there are thought waves which are continuously rising in our mind, called *vrittis*.

Patanjali's Yoga Sutra starts with योगचित्तवृत्तचिरोधः (yogaścittavṛttinirodhaḥ) Yoga is restraining the mind-stuff (Chitta) from taking various forms (Vrittis) which bar us from perceiving our True Self. So, all the practices of spiritual life are to calm these waves, to still the mind. What are these waves? Waves of attachment, waves of desires, of aversion, anger, egoism, jealousy. If that is the condition of our mind, how can the mind reflect the Atman?

That is why, Sri Ramakrishna again and again said, unless you purify your heart, you cannot progress in spiritual life. So, the most important part of spiritual life is how to make the mirror of our mind clean and pure which can reflect our Atman.

In the Bhagavad Gita, it is mentioned how the impurities develop in the mind. Desire(Kama), Anger(Krodha), Greed(Lobha), Egoism(Ahankar). These are the main symptoms of impurity. What is the root cause of all these? The root cause of all these is the 'unripe I' according to Sri Ramakrishna. What does it mean? The moment we identify ourselves with body and mind, then the trouble starts. Out of spiritual ignorance, the moment we identify ourselves with things other than the Atman, we get entangled in the mesh of Maya. So we have to be aware of this and try dis-identifying with body and mind.

How to achieve it? Different Yogas prescribe different methods. Basically, there are two: one is Jnana Yoga's way and the other is Bhakti Yoga's way. Very few persons are there who are qualified to practice the Jnana Yoga way, because body consciousness is very strong in most of us. So, unless the body consciousness is reduced to some extent, even if we repeat thousands of times 'I am Atman' the Atman will not be revealed to us.

The other way is the way of Bhakti. The way is to connect all our thoughts, actions, emotions, feelings with God, our chosen ideal. In other words, spiritualising our everyday life. That is an easier way for most of us. When we say Atman or Brahman, to most of us, image of it is not clear to us because they are very subtle. But it is easier for us to make Sri Ramakrishna, or Krishna, Rama or Jesus the pivot of our spiritual life as we have seen their pictures and we know about their life.

In this path we have to see the presence of God in everyone and everything. This is the most effective way to make our mind pure. Once चित्तशुद्धि (chitta shuddhi) is achieved, other spiritual practices become easy. Whenever we work, we should think of ourselves as doing the work as an instrument of God. After finishing the work, we can offer its fruits to God. Before having our food, let us offer it to God first. After getting up in the morning, we may look at His picture and bow down to Him and before going to bed, we may again bow down to Him. So, in this way,

throughout our day-to-day life we may connect our activities, thoughts and actions to God and try to chant His name mentally throughout the day.

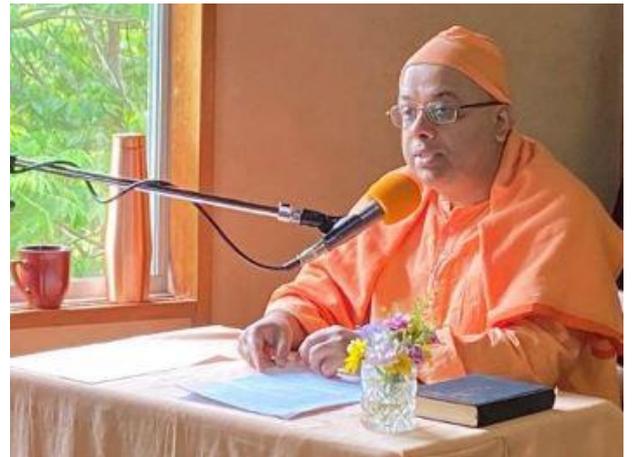
Swami Ashokanandaji was a scholarly monk of our Order and was the head of the Vedanta Society of Southern California. One of his discourses is called 'Spiritualising everyday Life' which beautifully explains how we can do it. If we are able to spiritualise our everyday life, चित्तशुद्धि (chitta shuddhi) will become easier and we shall be able to focus our mind on God and realize Him.

(concluded)

Tales and parables of Gautam Buddha

Swami Divyanathananda

The word 'Buddha' actually means one who is enlightened. The great prophet of Asia, whom the world knows as Gautam Buddha was born as Siddhartha to Suddhodhana and Maya devi. Suddhodhana was the chief of the sakya clan. The luxuries of the kingdom couldn't hold him long to its shackles. One day, as he was going out outside the palace he saw a sick man, an old man and a corpse. It was the first time in his life that he had seen those and it stirred his consciousness and made him think deeply about the purposes of life, for He felt that there are innumerable sufferings in human life, and these would surely come to him too. Then what is the purpose of life? Why do people suffer? Is it possible to remove suffering? Thus is one salient feature of great persons. They look at ordinary things and situations differently than we do. Their questions are always deep.



When Sri Ramakrishna started worshipping the divine Mother Bhavatarini at Dakshineswar, he would ask to himself 'Is this Mother real, or only an image of clay? Does she really partake of the food offerings? Does she listen to our prayers? Such types of questions seldom cross our minds. Prince Siddhartha developed extreme disgust for the luxuries of his palace and he became eager to find out answer to the questions he was seeking. So, he renounced the world and became a hermit. He underwent extreme hardships to know the truth. His body was falling into pieces, finally he realised extreme physical hardship won't land him anywhere, and he has to follow the middle path. Finally at Bodh Gaya he attained Nirvana. The truth which Buddha

got was the “Truth underlying life as a whole, namely, Life is full of Suffering, Desire is the cause of Suffering, Suffering ends at the destruction of Desire and Desire is destroyed by Right Living.” These are known as the four great truths and his teachings are based on these four truths.

He then set himself up to share the truths that he received from the depths of his consciousness to the entire humanity. He gave his first sermon at Sarnath, near Varanasi and slowly went to other parts of India. Many kings, learned men and women, as well as persons of ill repute and common men became his disciples. His wife and son too renounced and became bhikkhus. Buddha’s fame spread in other parts of the world too. He lived till he was 80 years old.

Buddha did not give much emphasis to rites and rituals, instead He laid stress on morality and ethics. His teachings were simple and practical.

Gautam Buddha often used interesting anecdotes and parables during his talk, and today I am going to narrate a few of those parables.

Once there was a wealthy, but a foolish man. Once when his neighbour built a three storied building, he became jealous, he also decided to construct a similar one. So, he called a carpenter and explained him what he wanted. The carpenter made the foundation of the building first, followed by the first floor, then the second and so on, at this point, the wealthy man became impatient and said, why do you have to do all these? I want the third floor built directly, that’s all!!

This story teaches us that if we have a goal, we must do the groundwork first. Without doing the first things first, the result won’t come on its own. We cannot reach the goal if we work haphazardly, ignoring the initial steps.

For those who seek enlightenment, Gautam Buddha laid down three ways of practice. The disciplines of practical behaviour, second- right concentration and third- wisdom. To illustrate, a farmer desiring a crop, first ploughs the ground, after the ground is ready, does irrigation, finally sows the seeds. He removes the weeds carefully which grows from time to time, and he patiently follows these steps for several days. Instead of doing that, if today he ploughs the land, tomorrow he can’t sow the seeds and day after tomorrow he can’t get the crop. Just as the farmer patiently does all the hard work for getting a good crop, similarly, the person who travels along the path of enlightenment must plough the mind with cultivating good virtues, he must remove the evil desires with the help of discrimination, then sow the seeds of concentration and wisdom. In this process if he travels along the path, he will attain enlightenment in course of time.

When one seeks enlightenment, one should focus on the goals and align the practices which will take him towards his cherished goal. One should be careful that he does not move away from the goal. To illustrate this fact, he used this analogy:

If a log of wood which is being carried through the running stream of water doesn't get grounded or is not taken away by any man or doesn't decay, then sooner or later will reach the sea. Similarly, the seeker of enlightenment should be careful from the snares of maya and should not be deluded by the outer beauty of unreal things. Sometimes spiritual aspirants give too much emphasis on hard austerities, torment their body but fail to make considerable progress in spiritual life. On the other hand, some aspirants are puffed up in vain glory about their renunciation. So, one has to be careful that one is not caught up in these. Keeping these in mind, if he carries out his spiritual practices diligently, ultimately he will attain nirvana. Only one who is not careful and not discriminative and is more intent on the method rather than the goal, gets caught up.

When a seeker after enlightenment travels in this life-journey he comes across many unpleasant things, which might create momentary disturbance in his mind. How should he deal with them? Gautam Buddha, to explain this point said:

There are three kinds of persons, the first one is like letters carved in rock. If they become angry, their anger and grudge are permanently imprinted on their mind. The second are like letters written on sand, they can be quickly erased. They might become angry sometimes, but their anger quickly passes away. The third one is like letter carved in water; their mark doesn't remain even for a moment. In other words, abuse and criticism does not even touch them. They are not the least affected.

In our life and in the world around us, we see the working of opposite forces: Heat and cold; pleasure and pain; happiness and sorrow; rich and poor; etc. So, we always have to adjust with them. Life is not always sweet and honey. Disturbing situation, if they arise, we have to face them patiently and bear with them. Buddha gave an illustration:

Once, there was a tussle between the head and tail of a snake. The tail argued, 'it is not proper that always you should go first.' The head said, 'it is absurd on your part to say so, the tail naturally remains always behind. Stay where you are.' Thus, one day there was a tug of war between the two. Finally, the snake broke into two parts and was finished.

Buddha himself, after undergoing hard austerities felt that too hard austerities lead one nowhere. Then he decided to take the middle path, i.e., neither too much austerities nor indulging in too much comfort. This analogy explains.

Once, there was a spiritual aspirant by the name of Shrona. He was zealous of achieving enlightenment, so underwent hard physical austerities. Finally, body started bleeding. When his teacher saw this, he said to Shrona, "Have you seen a harp? If it is fastened too tightly, it doesn't produce the right sound, on the other hand, if it is fastened too loosely, then also it won't produce the proper sound. In other words, the tuning has to be optimum, which will produce the desired note. In the same way, while performing physical austerities, we have to bear in mind that we have to follow the middle path. Too much hard austerities weaken the

body and mind, whereas indulging in luxuries will make our life easy-going, mind will become shallow and our zeal for enlightenment will decrease.

The following illustration highlights the fact that an iron will and determination can make impossible possible.

Once in the Himalayan mountains, in a bamboo grove, there lived a parrot. There also lived many other birds and animals and they lived peacefully. One day, a fire broke out by the rubbing of bamboos and the fire started spreading fast. The birds and other animals started going out hither and thither to save their lives. However, the parrot was looking for ways to do something for extinguishing the fire. Nearby there was a large pond, and immediately the parrot hit upon a plan. It flew to that pond and dipped itself in that water, came back to the place of the fire and started dripping water there. It went there again and again and repeated the same exercise. A heavenly God appeared and said, ‘You have a large heart, but do you think you can do much with this effort?’ The parrot said, there is nothing in this world that I can’t do so long as I have a pure and mighty will. If necessary, I shall continue this through my next life also. The God was pleased and by his divine power extinguished fire in that jungle.

In the same way, karmas of million births can be wiped away in one birth, when we are determined to put our heart and soul for achieving the task and take refuge in the Lord. In the path of spiritual enlightenment self-effort and divine grace, both are necessary.

In a certain kingdom, there was a custom of abandoning aged people in an inaccessible mountain. There was a minister in that kingdom, who had a father, who was also aging. That minister found it difficult to take him to that mountain, so dug an underground cave and hid his father.

One day, a God appeared before the king and asked a question. “If two serpents are kept nearby each other, can you tell the gender of them? How can you find out the answer?” The King was perplexed and could not answer. So he announced that anybody who could give answer to this question will be rewarded. The minister knew his father to be very wise, so went to him and asked the question. His father said, “that which moves is female and that, which lies still is male.”

Then another question: ‘If you keep two horses, one the mother and another its offspring, but grown up and of the same height as of the mother, how can you know which is the mother and which is its offspring? The king unable to find answer, sought the help of his minister, who again went to his father and came back with the reply: ‘Give some hay. The Mother will pass on to its offspring.’ Then another question. “Who is the one when being asleep is called the awakened one and on being awake is called the sleeping one?” “It is the one who is under training for enlightenment. He is awake, when compared to those who have not started on the path of enlightenment; He is asleep and when compared to those who have reached enlightenment.” -came the reply.

The king was very much impressed with the answers. When he discovered that the father of the minister had given answer to those questions, he realised the mistake of locking up aged persons and abolished the law.

Once in a certain village there was a young boy who was raised by his parents. In course of time the father died, after which he lived with his mother. After some time the young boy got married. In the beginning they lived happily, but soon, misunderstanding started to show up between the mother and his wife and it aggravated so much that the mother –in-law had to leave the household and started living separately.

Now after some time a child was born to this couple. Soon, rumour reached the mother-in-law that her daughter in law was saying to everybody that until her mother-in-law was there in the house, nothing worthwhile had happened in the family and only after she left the house the child was born. Hearing this, the mother- in- law was greatly disturbed. It roused so much anger in her that she said, it seems that righteousness has disappeared from this earth. She wanted to hold funeral service and burn righteousness. Then a God appeared there and wanted to stop her in various ways, but in vain. Then he said, in that case, let us burn the child and her mother.

Then the mother and law realised her mistake and begged the God for forgiveness and asked him to protect the mother and child. At that time her daughter-in-law also realised her mistake and went to the cemetery and brought the mother-in law back to the house.

Sujata was the wife of a rich merchant called Anathapinda. But she was arrogant and nagging and often quarrelled with the family members over small matters. Once Gautam Buddha happened to visit their house and in course of time, learnt about the arrogant behaviour of Sujata. Addressing Sujata, he said, ‘Sujata, do you know, there are seven type of wives. There is one, who is like a murderer. She has an impure mind, doesn’t honour her husband and consequently turns her mind to another man.’

‘Then, there is a wife who is like a thief. She consumes the hard-earned money of her husband and spends them in luxury and other physical comforts and if necessary, steals money also.’

There is a wife who is like a master. She rules the household and has even upper hand over her husband. Often she scolds the husband with harsh words.’

‘There is also a wife, who is like a Mother. She takes care of her husband and treats her as her own child.’

Then there is a wife who is like a sister and there is also a wife who is like a friend. Both these types are modest in their behaviour and takes proper care of the husband and at times of crisis, gives the right support.

Lastly, there is a wife who is like a maidservant. She serves the husband and other family members faithfully. She has no expectation, no resentments, but silently serves the family.

Then the blessed one said, 'Sujata, to which category do you belong?' Sujata at once realised her mistake and said, 'I would like to be like the last one'.

Sujata then slowly changed her behaviour, served her husband well and together they sought enlightenment.

• Thought of the Month •

First of all, a strong philosophical conviction. Second, an effort to change one's outlook in practice. Every time anybody passes by remind yourself, 'Here is God Himself passing in the form of this person'. Afterwards, you will not even say 'in the form of this person', but just 'God Himself passing by'. Hearing a voice you will say, 'God Himself is speaking'. Looking at the face, looking into the eyes, you will say, 'God Himself is looking through these eyes at me'. 'It is God who is shaking my hand'. You will have to persuade yourself of these things. Next, you should destroy all the opposite tendencies, opposite convictions and instincts. ...

A time comes, after the period of struggle is over, when a new quality reveals itself in the smile of the mother, and the children dote on her. She talks to them in a new way and there is something in it that goes deep into their hearts. The husband feels it too, and so do the relatives and friends. True, it is not fun in the old way, but to all it is a source of attraction, and all find it good to be with her.

- Swami Ashokananda

Gautam Buddha's Birthday Celebration During Monthly Retreat



During the monthly retreat, Lord Buddha's Birthday was celebrated. Lord Buddha's photograph was decorated with flowers and food offerings were made.

The following was chanted by all:

बुद्धं शरणं गच्छामि	Buddham Sharanam Gacchami
धम्मं शरणं गच्छामि	Dhammam Sharanam Gacchami
संघं शरणं गच्छामि	Sangham Sharanam Gacchami

This was followed by readings from Buddha's teachings.

The chantings and readings can be seen in the video uploaded on YouTube on the Society's channel.

Function to Remember Lonnie san During Monthly Retreat



During the afternoon session, a function was organised to remember Mr. Lonnie Hirsch. He was a close devotee of the Vedanta Society for nearly three decades and passed away on 24th April this year. He was the first editor of the Monthly Newsletter in English and did the job efficiently for about two decades. He was also a member of the Organising Committee of the public celebration of the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. He was a professional singer too. Lonnie san's wife Toshiko san had kindly accepted to attend. Swami Medhasananda and a few other devotees shared their reminiscences of good times spent with Lonnie san. Shanti san prepared a nice audio visual with old photographs with Lonnie san.

Some Photographs from the Monthly Retreat in May



• Story to Remember •

The Buddha and Ananda



According to Buddhist tradition, Ananda was a close disciple and cousin of the Buddha. He served as his attendant and was known for his devotion and deep admiration for the Buddha. One day, Ananda approached the Buddha and expressed his admiration, saying, "Lord, there is no one equal to you. You are the highest, the best, and the supreme teacher. There has never been and will never be anyone like you." Ananda expresses his reverence and admiration for the Buddha, believing him to be the greatest.

The Buddha then responds by asking Ananda, "Have you known me in this way: 'The Blessed One is the fully enlightened one, accomplished in knowledge and conduct, fortunate, knower of the world, the unsurpassed trainer of those who can be tamed, teacher of gods and humans, enlightened, and blessed?'"

Ananda admits that he doesn't know the Buddha's mind fully in this manner. The Buddha further questions Ananda if he knows the minds of all the Buddhas of the past, present, and future, and Ananda acknowledges that he does not possess such knowledge.

The Buddha then explains to Ananda that it is inappropriate to judge or declare someone as the greatest without complete knowledge of all Buddhas and their minds throughout the cosmos. He emphasizes that declaring someone the greatest should be based on a comprehensive understanding of all enlightened beings.

By posing these questions, the Buddha guides Ananda to reflect on the limitations of his knowledge and the vastness of the spiritual realm. The Buddha's intention is not to deny his own accomplishments but to teach Ananda about the proper perspective and humility required when considering the greatness of enlightened beings.

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