



DECEMBER 2023 -VOLUME 21 NUMBER 12

# The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN



## Thus Spake

God has revealed to me that only the Paramatman, whom the Vedas describe as the Pure Soul, is as immutable as Mount Sumeru, unattached, and beyond pain and pleasure. There is much confusion in this world of His maya. One can by no means say that 'this' will come after 'that' or 'this' will produce 'that'.

- Sri Ramakrishna

Wisdom is knowing I am nothing, Love is knowing I am everything, and between the two my life moves.

- Nisargadatta Maharaj

To speak ill of others is a dishonest way of praising ourselves; let us be above such transparent egotism. If you can't say good and encouraging things, say nothing. Nothing is often a good thing to do, and always a clever thing to say.

- Will Durant

## In this Issue:

- Thus Spake ... .. page 01
- Monthly Program Schedule ... .. page 02
- Annual Retreat Discourse by Swami Medhasananda (Part 1) ... .. page 03
- Annual Retreat Photos ... .. page 06
- Kali Puja Report and Photos ... .. page 08
- Story to Remember ... .. page 10

# Monthly Program Schedule for January 2024

1st (Mon)

**Kalpataru Day**

11:30 ~

Livestreaming

3rd (Wed)

**Service to the Homeless Narayana**

Contact [urara5599@gmail.com](mailto:urara5599@gmail.com) to participate

6th (Sat)

**Bhagavad Gita Study Class at the Indian Embassy**

10:30 ~ 12:00

(Japanese Only) (Video Uploaded Later)

21st (Sun)

**Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi Birthday Celebration**

11:00 ~ 16:30

Livestreaming

Prior reservation is necessary. Telephone: 046-873-0428

24th (Wed)

**Weekly Upanishad Study Class**

8:30 ~ 9:30

Zoom (Japanese Only)

30th (Sun)

**Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna Study Class**

14:00 ~ 16:00

Livestream and Zoom (Japanese Only)

# How to Resist the Onrush of Negative Emotions, Part 1

By Swami Medhasananda during Annual Outdoor Retreat held at Izu from 9~11<sup>th</sup> Sep 2023

Twelve questions to the audience:

(1) Who is the strongest?

A: He who is able to control his own mind. King Dasaratha thought he was the strongest, but upon being questioned by a Sage, he had to admit that he was not able to control his mind and his passions. Despite having conquered thousands in battle, King Dasaratha had not conquered himself, and hence, was not the strongest of them all.

(2) Who is the happiest?

A: The person who has no desires, he who has achieved the state of nirvasanam, or desirelessness.

(3) Who is bound?

A: He who has attachment. And our greatest attachment is to our own bodies.

(4) Who is the most beautiful?

A: He or she whose mind is pure.

(5) Who is the ugliest?

A: He whose mind is corrupt.

To illustrate this point, when Abraham Lincoln was president, a small girl wanted very much to meet the president, wrote letters to him and pestered her family to take her to meet him. After the president agreed, the family started towards the White House, but the father had warned the little girl that Abraham Lincoln, though a charismatic figure, was a very ugly person. Once they reached to the White House they were very warmly received by Lincoln, who made the girl sit on his lap and they lively talked for some time. Then the girl suddenly exclaimed: "Father why do you say he is ugly? He is very beautiful!", meaning Lincoln was a very beautiful person inside.

(6) What is always moving despite our body being still?

A: Our minds are always jumping hither and thither like monkeys, or they may also be comparing to a blast furnace, or to a volcano, though seemingly at rest in the surface, are full of scorching fire inside, about to explode at any moment.

(7) What is the fastest thing?

A: The mind, since it travels faster than rockets, even than light.

(8) What is the most innumerable thing?

A: Thoughts, since they are endless.

(9) What takes us to a divine state and suddenly to an animal state?

A: Our own minds. This is due to samskaras, accumulated behavioural and thought patterns over the course of many lives. Like flies, sometimes we alight on Sandesh (Indian sweetmeat), and the next moment on faeces. However, those whose minds are pure dwell uninterruptedly on God. We judge others harshly but are very lenient towards ourselves. Let us then be aware of our own condition and work hard to fix it.

(10) What is formless but at the same time has form?

A: Again, the mind, because the mind takes the form of what it perceives.

(11) What makes a man a Sage or a sinner?

A: One is Divine will, as the song goes: “Oh Mother Thou makest a man a sage, as well as a sinner!”. But from another point of view, it is our minds again, who make us sinners. Yet, by exerting our will power we can turn into sages.

As the Gita says: “Even if the worst of sinners worships Me with undivided devotion, he should be regarded a Sadhu, for he has rightly resolved” (Gita Ch.9 v.30). We can also become saints, because it is our birth right. If we dive deep, we shall find the pristine waters of Self-Knowledge.

(12) Who is our greatest friend and our greatest enemy?

A: Our own mind, since when uncontrolled it turns into our greatest enemy, and when under control, it is our greatest friend. The Gita says “The self (atman) is the greatest friend for him who has conquered himself by this self. But to the unconquered self (atman), this self is inimical, and behaves like a foe.” (Ch.6 v.6). Here the word “Atman” means mind.

It is important that we admit our own responsibility, which is something that great men and women can do. When Napoleon was imprisoned in St. Elena he said: “I alone am responsible for my present state, no one else.” Swamiji also always exhorted us: “Take responsibility on your own shoulders”. If we blame others of our current situation, we will never make progress. Hence, let us pay attention to what we can do to change our circumstances.

Our greatest enemy lives inside, and we cannot simply run away from him, that is our mind, because it follows us like a shadow. So, we must transform and purify our minds. A pure mind serves as our guide, our guru that will take us towards to Heaven or liberation. Conversely, an impure mind leads us to hell. The pure mind is equal to pure Buddhi, which is also equal to pure Atman.

To become pure, we must die before death, that is, we must destroy the negative mind. As it is said in the Bible: “Unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God” (John 3:3). If we cannot control our minds, we will get attached, have desires, suffer, lack proper concentration skills, commit mistakes and our egos will also create problems in terms of human relationships. On the other hand, if we can control our minds, our egos will be reduced, whereby human relationships will go smoothly, we will be able to love other

selflessly, as well as working perfectly without committing mistakes and studying efficiently.

The story of the three skulls.

A wise king in India named Vikramāditya, who was able to always give the right answer to queries, was once asked by a man: “Revered sir, a person brought these three skulls to us. Can you please tell us whose skull is that of the wisest person when he was alive?”.

Quickly the King asked for a bamboo stick to be brought to him. Thereupon he inserted it through the left ear cavity of the first skull and it went straight out through the right ear. He repeated the same for the second skull, whereby the bamboo stick went from the left ear and out through the mouth. Lastly, he introduced the stick through the left ear in the third skull, but this time the stick did not go out through any orifice.

Then the King spoke his verdict: “Whatever the first man heard, entered through one ear and went out through the other, so he was not wise, because he did not retain anything. The second man again, although he did hear and pay attention to many things he heard, he let it all out through his mouth. So, he was not wise either. However, the third man was wise, because he retained all that he heard and never let it out.” In other words, the third man listened attentively, and then through practice, he was able to assimilate and retain what he heard.

Unless we are very strongly motivated and practice intensively, we will not advance spiritually. If we just repeat the name of the things we want, such as money and food, these will not come on their own accord and prostrate at our feet. We must work hard to get them. Similarly, we must practice hard to control our minds and achieve our goal of mental peace and bliss.

To do this also we must beware of the onrush of negative emotions, in other words, mental tsunamis that wash away all discrimination and self-control, totally unexpected, without warning and swiftly. We must note, however, that these tsunamis in our minds build up gradually due to lack of self-control and indulging in sense pleasures, until they compound and form a huge tidal wave of desire, anger and lust or greed (kama, krodha and lobha in Sanskrit).

Once the tidal wave has risen, it is very hard to counter act it. Some people, though generally good, may end up committing a crime due to an uncontrolled impulse of anger, lust or greed that had been building up for a long time. Therefore, we must control these impulses at the outset, when they are still building up, checking every small thought and wave that is going in a negative direction.

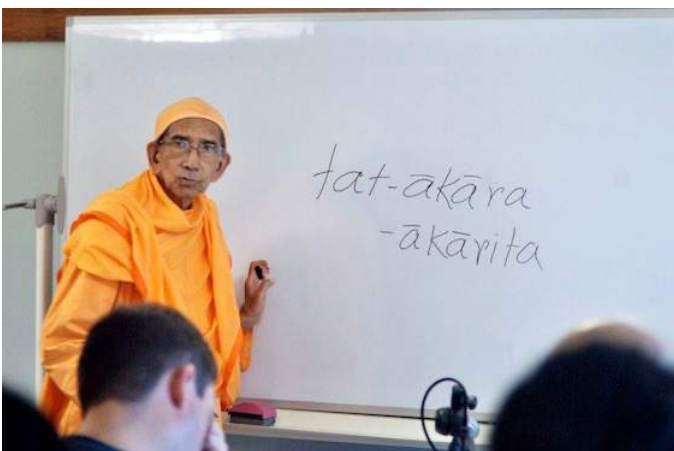
To do that we need to take into account four things:

- (1) We should know the purpose for which we are controlling our minds.
- (2) We should know how to control our minds.
- (3) We should have patience.

(4) We should have love for our ideal.

Our minds can be compared to elephants. These are huge, strong animals, that in the wild, tend to be very aggressive and turbulent. However, in Asian countries like Thailand, even children are able to tame them and obey their commands. For that they employ different techniques to slowly but surely tame them, having patience and love for the animal. To tame the wild elephant of our mind is even a more challenging, but it will help us all the more, since it will lead us to happiness and God-realization.

## Some Photos from the Annual Retreat







• Thought of the Month •

When a simpleton abused him, Buddha listened in silence; but when the man had finished, Buddha asked him: "Son, if a man declined to accept a present made to him, to whom would it belong?" The man answered: "To him who offered it." "My son," said Buddha, "I decline to accept your abuse, and request you to keep it for yourself."



## Report and Some Photos from Kali Puja

Worship of the Divine Mother Kali was performed at the Annex of the Kyokai on Sunday, 12th of November from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm. The ritualistic Puja included offerings of special food, Arati, flower offerings by the devotees and singing of hymns. It was followed by the Homa ceremony. At the end dinner prasad was served to the devotees. About 135 devotees attended the Puja and were delighted to watch it in a serene atmosphere and partake of the Prasad.







• Story to Remember •

## The Freedom Parrot

A man, a great man, a fighter for freedom was traveling in the mountains. He stayed in a caravanserai for the night. He was amazed that in the caravanserai there was a beautiful parrot in a golden cage, continually repeating “Freedom! Freedom!” And it was such a place that when the parrot repeated the word “Freedom!” it would go on echoing in the valleys, in the mountains.

The man thought: “I have seen many parrots, and I have thought they must want to be free from those cages... but I have never seen such a parrot whose whole day, from the morning to the evening when he goes to sleep, is spent in calling out for freedom.” He had an idea. In the middle of the night, when the owner was fast asleep, he got up and opened the door of the cage. He whispered to the parrot, “Now get out.”

But he was very surprised that the parrot was clinging to the bars of the cage. He said to him again and again, “Have you forgotten about freedom? Just get out! The door is open, and the owner is fast asleep; nobody will ever know. You just fly into the sky; the whole sky is yours.”

But the parrot was clinging so deeply, so hard, that the man said, “What is the matter? Are you mad?” He tried to take the parrot out with his own hands, but the parrot started pecking at him, and at the same time he was shouting “Freedom! Freedom!” The valleys in the night echoed and re-echoed, but the man was also stubborn; he was a freedom fighter.

He pulled the parrot out and threw him into the sky; and he was very satisfied, although his hand was hurt. The parrot had attacked him as forcefully as he could, but the man was immensely satisfied that he had made a soul free. He went to sleep.

In the morning, as the man was waking up, he heard the parrot shouting, “Freedom! Freedom!” He thought perhaps the parrot must be sitting on a tree or on a rock. But when he came out, the parrot was sitting in the cage. The door was open.

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