



MARCH 2022 -VOLUME 20 NUMBER 03

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

**APRIL 2022
Calendar**



Birthdays

**Sri Sri
Ramanavami**

Friday, 4 March

Zushi Events

While COVID restrictions had been lifted somewhat by the Japanese government, new Omicron variants require we continue to observe stringent precautions.

SPECIAL NOTICE

- All Wednesday Morning Weekly Upanishad Study Classes and
- Gospel Sri Ramakrishna Study Class and
- Bhagavad Gita Study Class at the Indian Embassy

**ARE CANCELLED
for April.**

See page 02 for details!



✧ Thus Spake ✧

“If you must be mad, why should you be mad for the things of the world? If you must be mad, be mad for God alone.”

- Sri Ramakrishna

“The mind of a man who thinks of sense-objects, is attached to them, but the mind of one who remembers Me is merged in Me alone.”

- Sri Krishna

Zushi Annexe 20 March 2022
Sri Ramakrishna Birth Celebration
PM Session Talk

How to Eliminate the Ego in the Light of the Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna by Swami Medhasananda

The Main Cause of Our Problems

My discourse will start with a question to you. As we all know, there are three important dimensions of our lives: One is myself; my mind, my body, my past, my present, my future, my aspirations,

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Vedanta Society of Japan

Message Regarding Monthly Programmes for APRIL 2022

Although COVID restrictions imposed by the Japanese government with the recent wave of the Omicron variant have been partially lifted, many precautions will remain in place.

Vedanta Society of Japan will continue to observe social distancing, mask wearing, and avoid crowding in programme areas. Although several programmes are cancelled for April, attendance to the Zushi Monthly Retreat and participation in Akhanda Japam remains space limited, so please contact us if you wish to attend either of these programmes.

Swami Medhasananda, President
Vedanta Society of Japan

APRIL 2022 Calendar of Programmes

6th (Wed) April
13th (Wed) April

Weekly Upanishad Study Class
*** Cancelled for APRIL**

2nd (Sat) April
Bhagavad Gita Study Class at the Indian Embassy
*** Cancelled for APRIL**

10th (Sun) April
Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna Study Class
*** Cancelled for APRIL**

17th (Sun) April
**** Monthly Zushi Retreat ****
AM Session
Lunch Prasad
PM Session Talk
with Swami Divyanathananda
*** RESERVATIONS REQUIRED TO ATTEND ***
Please contact prior 11th April - 046-873-0428
Live Streaming [Click here](#) to go to YouTube.

29th (Fri) April
Akhanda Japam
05:00 ~ 20:00
Please contact to participate at an hour(s) of your choosing
<vedanta.karmayoga(at mark)gmail.com>



Ms. Yoko Sasaki (Interpreter) and Swami Medhasanandaji

How to Eliminate Ego (from page 1)

my ambitions. Another dimension is relationships; with family members, with colleagues, with friends, with neighbours, with business associates. The third is work itself. These are the basic three. Now let us take the case of our various relationships. Are these always smooth or do they sometimes not go so smoothly? Well, we all know that the answer answer is in the negative. My question is, what is the main cause of such problems?

If we examine deeply the source of our relationship problems, we usually find that our ego, or I-ness and my-ness is the source. For example, both mother and father are concerned with the future welfare of their child, but each may have different ideas on the best, realistic or proper means of providing for the child's future. The welfare of the child is the common goal. Yet, the mother thinks her daughter should pursue the study of science, but the father recognises some artistic talent in her and feels she should pursue a line of study in the visual arts, music or dance. Each parent believes their's is the best career path for the child.

I-ness and My-ness

What I want to say here is that each one thinks, 'my way is the best way.' Isn't this 'I think so' one's ego? This is 'I-ness'. Then we have 'my-ness' as in 'my child'. So mother loves 'her child.' She may love the children of others, but not to the extent that she loves 'her child.' Why? She's 'my' daughter. He's 'my' son. So after 'I-ness' and 'my-ness' the 'attachment' comes. These are where most of our relationship problems derive, and why we experience less peace and joy.

The Kena Upanishad starts with an interesting story of a fight between the gods (devas) and the demons (asuras). There are many such stories of fights between the gods and the demons, as they are always in conflict, and sometimes the gods would win and sometimes the demons would. When the demons would win they would occupy the heavens and rule the universe for a time. The gods, being generally more powerful, usually win and rule the universe for longer periods. When the 'asuras' are defeated they want to regain power and create evermore powerful weapons, with which destructive wars ensue once again.

The Pride of the Devas

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How to Eliminate Ego (from page 3)

Now, the story I referred to is one such conflict that the devas finally won. So the gods began celebrating their victory. Indra was the king of the gods, Agni the god of fire, Pavana the god of winds; so many gods and goddesses were celebrating with dancing, with singing by professionals and great fun over their victory. Suddenly there appeared a strange being just visible at a distance. Having never seen such a strange being the gods became curious to know what it was. So the king of the gods, Indra, first sent Agni, the god of fire, to find out who the stranger was. “Agni,” said Indra, “you go and find out who that fellow is!”

Agni approached the stranger who asked Agni, “Who are you?”

“I am Agni, the god of fire,” he responded.

“Oh, and what power is it that you possess?” asked the stranger.

“I can burn anything!” Agni boasted.

The stranger then placed a blade of grass before Agni and said, “OK then, burn this.”

This request amused Agni, as it was a mere blade of grass. Yet, when he attempted to set it ablaze, the simple blade of grass would not burn. Agni, surprised, then applied all the power he could, yet the grass would not burn. Ashamed and humiliated, Agni returned to report to Indra that he could not discover who the strange being was. At this Indra sent the god of wind to learn who the stranger was.

Confidently, the god of wind approached the stranger who asked, “Who are you?”

“I am the god of winds,” he replied.

“And what is it that you can do?”

“I am hurricanes, typhoons, and all manner of the winds that blow” he boasted. I can blow anything away. I send hurricanes like Katrina and super typhoons like Odette to wreak havoc.”

“I see, you are indeed powerful,” said the stranger. “Allow me to place this single blade of grass before you. Now blow it away!”

The god of wind gave a puff, but the blade of grass did not budge. He blew harder, still nothing. Incredulous, Pavana huffed and puffed with all his might, yet the blade of grass did not move at all. Humiliated, the god of winds, hung his head in shame and reported back to Indra that he too had failed to identify the strange being, the Yaksha, that had bewildered both the god of fire and the god wind.

This provoked Indra, the confident king of gods, to investigate himself. Yet, as Indra approached, suddenly the strange being simply disappeared. This left Indra completely confused when Uma Haimavati Durga, the Devine Mother, appeared before him. With reverence Indra asked, “Mother, who was that strange being?”

“My son,” Mother answered, “Did you not recognise Him? That was none other than Brahman, who incarnated Himself as that being to curb your egos. You thought that by your powers alone you had won the battle, but it was by His power you were all able to defeat the the demon asuras.”

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How to Eliminate Ego (from page 4)

Taking Credit for Triumphs

I suppose you all have seen a football (soccer) match and the gestures of a player who scores a goal. They tend to clench and pump their fists in triumph, meaning 'I have done it – by my power.' So as this relates to our story, remember that whatever we achieve, whatever we get, it is the power of God behind it. Do we remember this? No! We forget. This is another expression of our egos and our vanities. The player in his victory display taking all the credit, hardly remembers the great pass he received enabling his successful kick. The same thing occurs in companies, someone takes the credit for some success, yet colleagues participated as well. In laboratories inventions and discoveries are made with the help of others. Yet when Nobel Prizes are awarded the recipient often claims himself alone as the doer. Actually, anyone, in anyway, in whatever field of endeavour, in any special achievement by there is the power of God behind it. Of course there are some great achievers do remember this.

Our Indian devotees in attendance will recall the name of the legendary singer Hemanta Kumar Mukhopadhyay. I had a chance to hear him speak in an interview broadcast over radio and television. The interviewer asked, "You have such a beautiful and melodious voice, how is it possible? How did you come by it?"

The famed singer simply replied, "It's God's gift!" It's not humility. He said so not in a contrived humble and hypocritical response. No, he believed his voice was God's gift.

In reading from the Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna:

Q: "When shall I be free?"

A: "When that I has vanished. I and mine is ignorance. Thou and thine is knowledge."

Sri Ramakrishna put the matter in the form of a mantra, in mixed dialects of Hindi and Sanskrit: "Not I, not I, but Thou, Thou." Throughout *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, the Master repeats this like a mantra, "Not I, not I, but Thou, Thou." He says, "By acquiring the conviction that all is done by the will of God, one becomes merely a tool in His hand. Then one is free, even in this life."

There is a song in Bengali 'Shokoli Tomari Ichha' . [Maharaj sang]

*Shokoli tomari ichha
Iccha-Mayi Tara Tumi
Tomar Karma Tumi Karo Ma
Loke Bale Kari Ami*

The theme of the song is, 'O Mother, You are the doer. I do as You make me do.'

*Panke Baddha Kara Ari Pangure Langhao Giri
Kare Dao Ma Brahma-Pada Kare Karo Adhogami*

*'Sometimes the elephant gets stuck in the mire and with all his strength cannot move,
and by Your power a lamb person can climb the hill'
'By Your power one is elevated to the post of Brahma and the others.'*

How to Eliminate Ego (from page 5)

Then there is another Sanskrit verse which starts with, 'Mukam Karoti Vachalam' meaning:

*'O Lord, by Your power the speechless becomes a proficient speaker'
'The lame can climb the mountain'*

Praising God for One's Accomplishments

There is a true story about one young Indian woman named Arunima Sinha, who was travelling by train with her brother. Suddenly robbers (dacoits) entered their compartment. The thieves of course wanted to snatch up whatever was available, but Arunima, an accomplished athlete, resisted. At this the robbers pushed her out the door of the moving train and she injured her leg so badly it necessitated amputation. The young woman refused to accept this incident as a defeat in her life, and later that same Arunima climbed Mount Everest. She is the world's first female amputee to ascend Everest.

There is also an accomplished dancer, Sudha Chandran, who injured both legs as a result of an accident. One leg developed gangrene and was amputated and she got a wooden prosthetic leg and began to practice dancing again. Surprisingly, with persistence her dancing became quite accomplished and attractive to watch. She was asked by someone how could she dance on a wooden leg. She answered that one does not dance by legs, one dances by the power of the mind. The source of the power of mind, or in other words, the will force is God.

Sri Ramakrishna said, *"If after all you cannot destroy this 'I', then let it remain as 'I the servant'." The self that knows itself as the servant and lover of God will do little mischief.*" There are two ways to control this 'ego', the root of our problems; desires, attachments, anger, delusion, jealousy. The root of most of these problems from which we suffer is 'I', the ego.

Body/Mind Complex or Atman

Let me say a little about philosophy at this point in our discussion. As you know our personality has many levels. Fundamentally, first is the body level, then the energy level, then the level of senses—hearing, seeing, smelling, touching and tasting, then the mental level, then intelligence, memory and the ego level. This ego level and the pride and vanity we discussed earlier are not the same. This ego level is the source from which the idea of 'I-ness' and 'my-ness' ensues, and just beyond this level is our Self, our Atman. This Atman is always pure, it is infinite, it is absolute, it is free and always unattached, peaceful and joyful. On one side of this I-ness and my-ness ego is the Atman, and on the other side is intelligence, mind, senses, body, etc. Now it depends on what this very subtle I-ness and my-ness ego identifies with. If we identify this I-ness with mind, intelligence, body and senses, we will be attached. Then we will have desires followed by all sorts of sufferings. But if we do not attach our I-ness with this body/mind complex and attach our I-ness with the Atman, then we become free, we become absolute, we become eternal, we become full of joy and peace. This 'ego' plays a crucial role in shaping our nature.

If our I-ness is identified with the body/mind complex when our body is diseased, we will think that we are diseased. If there is a chance of our death, then we think we will die and there will be fear. The mind has ups and downs, if we identify with the ever fluctuating mind, we are happy when the mind is happy, and we are sad when the mind is sad. Alternately, when mind is unhappy, then we, identified with mind, are therefore unhappy. Up and down and up and down we go. When we identify with the body and we have children, our attachment to them grows. Thus desires and attachments grow, becoming the source of many births and deaths. On the other hand, if we identify ourselves with the Atman, because Atman is eternal, Atman is infinite, Atman is always free, Atman is full of peace, Satchitananda (existence, consciousness, bliss absolute), we will also

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How to Eliminate Ego (from page 6)

also be Satchitananda, we will enjoy peace, joy and freedom. This is the difference regarding which level of personality we identify with, body/mind complex or with the Atman.

This is the jnana yogi's way. Followers of the path of knowledge discriminate in this way: "If the body is diseased, I am not diseased. If the mind is sad, I am not sad. If the mind is stressed, I am not stressed."

Jnanis always think in this way, 'I am always free. I am eternal. I have no fear.' In this way they rid themselves of the ego that attaches itself to body and mind.



There is also another way to eliminate the ego, and that is bhakti yoga. Bhakti yogis believe that everything occurs by the power of God alone. They believe that everything belongs to God. My family, my house, my money, my health, everything belongs to God. The master of the house is the Lord. He has lent it to us. Be careful! Immediately we think, 'No, I have purchased the house, so how is it that God is the master?' The same with the purchase of an automobile, 'No, I got the loan and I have to pay back the loan! How can I think that Sri Ramakrishna is the owner of the car? No, it is my car!' So you see, it can also be very difficult to think as the bhakti yogi. But devotees constantly remind themselves; from where did the power come so that I could do the work and earn money. Go to the source and you will understand that finally it all begins and ends with God. If we always remember this, automatically we get rid of the sense of ownership and consequent attachment.

Two Attitudes for Devotees

Sri Ramakrishna colourfully described the 'I' of a Jnani and the 'I' of a Bhakta as the attitude of a baby monkey (infant) and the attitude of a kitten. We have all witnessed the differing behaviours of the infant and the kitten. The infant monkey holds tightly to its mother, while the mother cat carries the kitten here and there. There is some risk that the infant may lose its grasp and fall, but this is the jnani's way. On the other hand, the mother cat carries her kittens, one by one, securely in her jaws to the bed, the fireplace, etc. And when the mother cat is busy elsewhere what does the kitten do to get her attention? It mews for its mother, who comes and attends to the kitten. This is the bhakta's way. Sri Ramakrishna also gives the example of these two attitudes with two children and the father. One child holds the hand of the father and the father takes the hand of the other child. Suppose the three come to a ditch and the first child, paying no attention, slips into the ditch. The father losing his child's grasp will not let go of the child whose hand he had taken.

So we should choose our way, bhakti or jnana. It is easier to depend on God as a bhakta, thinking that God is the real master, depending on God, and accepting that whatever God does, it is the best for us. Believing in this way let us not be hypocrites, hypocrites in the sense that we say one thing, but believe or behave differently.

Be Not a Hypocrite

I will end with another story from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, as have they all been today. In this story a brahmin has a very nice garden, full of beautiful fruit trees and fragrant flowers wonderfully landscaped. This was a private garden, and as such the gate usually remained

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closed to prevent damage and robberies of fruits and flowering plants.

One day the gate remained open for some reason and a cow wandered in, and doing as a cow does, began eating the choicest plants of the garden. When the brahmin arrived home to see the cow ruining his garden, he became so enraged he picked up a bamboo post and began beating the cow so severely the poor animal succumbed.



As a Hindu, to hurt a cow itself is a sin, but for a brahmin to kill a cow is a great sin to incur. As the sin of killing a cow was about to enter into brahmin the person of the brahmin he discriminated and said to the sin, 'Wait a while. I didn't commit this sin. All of our limbs have a presiding deity, and the presiding deity of the hand is Indra. I have not killed the cow, Indra has killed the cow. I was just the instrument, so go to Indra.' The sin then found Indra, who was very surprised, and the sin narrated the event to Indra, who asked the sin to wait a bit longer. Indra then took the disguise of a traveller, entered the garden and began singing its praises to himself, yet audible to others.

The man approached the brahmin and asked, 'Sir, do you know who the master of this lovely garden is?'

'Yes, yes, I am the owner, ' replied the brahmin.

'Oh, I see. Can you please show me around your beautiful creation?'

'Yes, sir, it would be my pleasure to show you around,' agreed the brahmin, who full of pride began pointing out the various plants and flowers, taking full credit and explaining from where plants were sourced, the expenses and efforts incurred, etc., to his guest.

Finally, they arrived at the place where the cow was lying dead! The traveller, shocked, exclaimed, 'It's a dead cow! Goodness, who killed it.'

Suddenly, the brahmin became speechless. His taking credit and boasting regarding every branch and root of his garden abruptly ended.

'You rascal,' Indra cried appearing in his true form. 'The planting, designing, selecting of every seed and aspect of this garden you proudly take credit for! But when a cow is beaten to death in your garden, Indra has done it? Indra is to blame? No! Now, you take the sin of killing the cow!'

This is the way of the hypocrite. One who takes credit for accomplishments, and blames others for failures—I am not responsible! My colleagues are responsible! No, that will not do. We must be sincere in our practice. Either we follow the jnani's way or the bhakti's way as sincerely as possible and discriminate on our ego—both gross and subtle, and become a spiritually elevated soul.

These are Sri Ramakrishna's teachings on how to eliminate the ego. •



Nippon Vedanta Kyokai, Zushi
Sri Sri Ramakrishna Deva 187th Birthday Celebration
Sunday, 20 March 2022

Venue: Annexe 場所：アネックス

Programme

- 06:00 Mangalarati (Main shrine)
マンガラ・アラティ(本館にて朝の礼拝)
- 06:30 Chanting & Meditation
聖句朗唱、瞑想
- 10:30 Puja , Offering, Homa, Pushpanjali (Annexe)
プージャ、供物、護摩、花の奉獻(アネックス)
- 13:00 Lunch (Prasad) 昼食(プラサード)
- 15:00 Chanting and Reading 聖句朗唱、聖典輪読
Discourse : Swami Medhasananda Theme: Sri Ramakrishna
Interpreter : Ms. Yoko Sasaki
講話 : スワミー・メーダサーナンダ
講話テーマ: シュリー・ラーマクリシュナ
通訳: 佐々木陽子氏
Devotional Songs 賛歌
- 17:00 Tea 茶菓
- 18:30 Arati (Annexe) 夕拝、讃歌(アネックス)





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HOMA





VIBHUTI



• Story to Remember •

The Art of Making Fire

After many years of labour an inventor discovered the art of making fire. He took his tools to the snow-clad northern regions and initiated a tribe into the art—and the advantages—of making fire. The people became so absorbed in this novelty that it did not occur to them to thank the inventor who one day quietly slipped away. Being one of those rare human beings endowed with greatness, he had no desire to be remembered or revered; all he sought was the satisfaction of knowing that someone had benefited from his discovery.

The next tribe he went to was just as eager to learn as the first. But the local priests, jealous of the stranger's hold on the people, had him assassinated. To allay any suspicion of the crime, they had a portrait of the Great Inventor enthroned upon the main altar of the temple; and a liturgy designed so that his name would be revered and his memory kept alive. The greatest care was taken that not a single rubric of the liturgy was altered or omitted. The tools for making fire were enshrined within a casket and were said to bring healing to all who laid their hands on them with faith.

The High Priest himself undertook the task of compiling a Life of the Inventor. This became the Holy book in which his loving kindness was offered as an example for all to emulate, his glorious deeds were eulogised, his superhuman nature made an article of faith. The priests saw to it that the Book was handed down to future generations, while they authoritatively interpreted the meaning of his words and the significance of his holy life and death. And they ruthlessly punished with death or excommunication anyone who deviated from their doctrine. Caught up as they were in these religious tasks, the people completely forgot the art of making fire.

From the Lives of the Desert Fathers:

Abbot Lot came to Abbot Joseph and said, "Father, according to my capacity I keep my little rule and my little fast, my prayer, my meditation, my contemplative silence; and according as I am able I cleanse my heart of evil thoughts. Now what more should I do?"

The elder stood up in reply. He stretched out his hand to heaven and his fingers became ten lamps of fire. He said: "This: become totally changed into fire."

- from 'The Prayer of the Frog' by Anthony de Mello

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