

# CHICAGO CALLING



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Quarterly eZine of the  
Vivekananda Vedanta  
Society of Chicago  
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Our eZine was first published on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014 on the holy Tithi Puja of Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna.

The purpose of "Chicago Calling", our Society's eZine is to propagate spiritual and cultural messages and its first publication on Sri Ramakrishna's celebration day is very significant, because Sri Ramakrishna is considered as the Viśva-Mānuṣa (Universal Man) by the savants of the modern world.

The vitality of spirituality lies in universal, all encompassing idealism. Thousands and thousands of years before, almost at the dawn of human civilization, a few great souls, Rishis, realized the Truth and declared:

जनं विभ्रती बहुधा विवाचसं/ नाना धर्माणी पृथिवी यथौकसम्॥  
janam bibhrātī bahudhā vivācasam, nānā dharmāṇī pṛthivī yathaukasam.

The world with its variety of races, languages and creeds are One. (Atharva Veda, xii. 1. 45)

How can so many different people of different lands with different cultures be one? By appearance, language, and culture people may look different but they all have one common consciousness. Discovering this, the sages, the seers of the old declared: शृण्वन्तु विश्वे अमृतस्य पुत्राः शृण्वन्तु विश्वे अमृतस्य पुत्राः "Listen to me, O children of Immortality!" (Rig Veda x.xiii.1) Who did the great soul address as children?

The answer is given in the Yajur Veda (xxvi.2) – यथेमां वाचं कल्याणीमावदनि जनेभ्यः। ब्रह्मराजन्याभ्यां शूद्राय चार्याय च स्वाय चारणाय॥

yathemām vācam kalyāṇīmāvadani janebhyah, brahmarājanyābhyām śūdrāya cāryāya ca svāya cāraṇāyam. "I speak these blessed words to the people at large, to the Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra and the foreigner."

Again the idea of the universality of spirituality is declared, yaḥ saṁdeśyo varūṇo, "God who is

Lord of our own land," yo videśyah, "is also Lord of foreign land."

The same universalism of the ancient Vedic age was practiced and propagated by a modern sage, Bhagwan Sri Ramakrishna.

In the history of religion, this is the first and the only time that anyone has practiced all the paths prescribed by the major religions. Sri Ramakrishna realized the Truth, God, through the spiritual practices of Vaishnava, Tantra and Vedanta – the major faiths of Hinduism. Then he realized the Truth of Islam, Christianity etc. and declared, amidst the din and bustle to the so-called faithful of different religions, "As many faiths, so many paths." "Jata mat, tata path". This is the ultimate answer to stop conflicts and bloodshed in the name of God.

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna's principal disciple, Swami Vivekananda, preached this universal idealism all over the world and started on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1897 a unique spiritual organization, Ramakrishna Mission. The goal was to train youths to practice pure spirituality for themselves and to preach universal love and brotherhood for the betterment of the human society, आत्मनो मोक्षार्थम् जगत् हिताय च Ātmano mokṣārtham jagat hitāya ca. "For one's own salvation and the welfare of the world."

Since 1897 this organization of monastic and lay devotees, now having branches all over the world, has been trying hard to bring home to everyone that, God is One. This is the ultimate religion. This was, described as, "यत्र विश्वम् भवत्येक नीडम् yatra viśvam bhavatyeka niḍam – "In Him the whole world has found one home, one place of rest, one nest." [Yajur Veda (xxxii. 8)].

Continuing the tradition of Sri Ramakrishna, all paths are leading to the same goal, the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago celebrated Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Jayanti, Rama Navami, Mahavir Jayanti, Hanuman Jayanti.

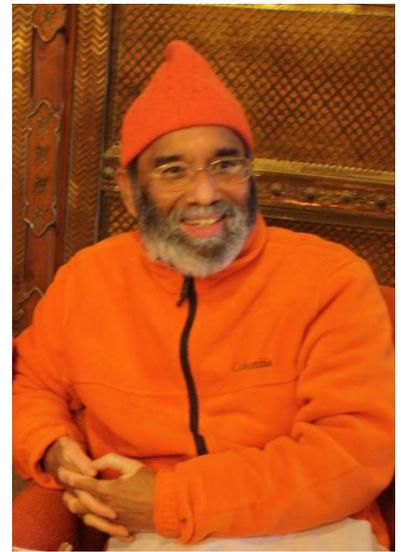
Easter was celebrated by discussing the significance of the Resurrection and Christ's "Sermon on the Mount" from the view- point of Vedanta. The great philosopher Shankaracharya and Lord Buddha were remembered through their lives and philosophies on their respective Jayanti days.

Let light come from all directions, make us all happy and friendly!

# HELP, ASSIMILATION, AND HARMONY FROM TANTRA POINT OF VIEW

**SWAMI SHANTARUPANANDA**

*Swami Shantarupananda Minister-in-Charge, Vedanta Center of Portland, OR.  
This lecture was delivered on Nov. 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at "Chicago Calling".*



Revered Swami Suhitanandaji, Swami Chetananandaji, Ishatmanandaji, and brothers and sisters

I wondered why Swami Ishatmanandaji selected this subject of tantra for me. Please do not think for a moment that I am really a tantric or kapalik, because here everything is specialized, or as you say, professional. I am not a professional in that respect. But as my brother monk has assigned me this task, I would like to dwell on this subject. This particular theme, what Swami Ishatmanandaji has selected, I like a lot.

Swami Vivekananda said to "help and not fight." Why did he say this in America? Because in my opinion, this is the only country in the world where you find that, if there is any calamity, help is sent as soon as possible, wherever they are. This is my view, but not only my personal view. It is my experience also. Wherever I go, people come forward and ask, "How can I help you?" That is the spirit of America. No wonder why Swami Vivekananda said "help and not fight" from here, in America.

Sorry, my brother monks from other countries may not like this. My brother monk from Brazil yesterday mentioned that in Brazil there is more freedom, but I must point out that this fact does not have the same meaning as what Swami Vivekananda was referring to.

Swami Vivekananda read a paper on Hinduism in Chicago on the date 19

September 1893. I am not going to read the whole thing. It would take a long time. Towards the end he says, referring to the concept of Universal Religion, "Ashoka's council was a council of the Buddhist faith. Akbar's, though more to the purpose, was only a parlour meeting. It was reserved for America to proclaim to all quarters of the globe that the lord is in every religion."

In America we see these qualities of freedom and courage. I express my thanks and gratitude, to my brother monk Ishatmananda for selecting this theme.

Let me speak something about this subject of tantra. It is very interesting to note that despite the considerable number of scriptures on Tantrism, it has been one of the most neglected branches of spiritual studies. Even today many people think Tantra is a kind of black magic. The study of the antiquity of Tantra dates back to 5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> century AD. And the Atharva Veda is considered to be one of the sources of Tantra tradition.

You can find that there are three traditions; the Vedic tradition, the Puranic tradition, and the Tantra tradition.

Tantra's definition is "Tanyate vistaryate jnanam anena iti tantram" which means in other words, tantra is the scripture by which the light of knowledge spreads. It also means 'to weave, and to expand'. So tantra is not confined to a particular group of people or a particular nation.

Tantra takes into account the whole world, both good and bad, to achieve this goal. But remember, unless – and until – you know what tantra is, you might become more worldly, more hypocritical, and dangerous to you and to others if you practice it.

In tantra there are three ways of reaching the goal, and these three ways are meant for those with different qualities and tendencies in life. The first one is called Pashu Bhava, animal disposition or bestial mode. These are people in whom lust, anger and other animal tendencies are predominant, and they will try to reach the goal, avoiding all objects of temptations, maintaining external purity, repeating God's name, and performing purascharana (repeated recitation of a holy mantra). They have to transcend these temptations to reach the highest goal. The idea is not to get stuck in these. The second one is called Veera bhava, heroic mode. This is meant for those people whose animal propensities are not as strong. They should remain unperturbed while living amidst the temptations of lust and gold and try to devote their minds to God. They take the challenges and eventually overcome them. But this can be dangerous. The third one is called Divya bhava, divine mode. It is meant for those whose minds are free from lust and anger.

Their intense longing for God overpowers all kinds of temptations. For them, the practice of forgiveness, sincerity, kindness, contentment, truthfulness, and other virtues has become quite natural. This bhava is where you find divine nature. Sri Ramakrishna, practiced Divya Bhava. which is more suitable for those who are spiritually developed.

There are great subjects within tantra, Hindu tantra, Buddha tantra, etc.. It is a very vast subject. Sri Ramakrishna practiced Divya Bhava which is taken from Vishnu Kranta. There we find this message of unity and "help and not fight" in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, who really practiced tantra. Hearing the name of karana (wine), his mind went beyond everything and merged in the underlying cause of the universe and went into deep Samadhi. When he heard the word

Yoni, female organ, his mind went into the beginning of creation, God. Yoni is the source of all creation – man, woman, good, bad and even dust - everything.

From the life of Sri Ramakrishna, we find that he gave us the concept that we can go ahead with this Tantra sadhana without having a woman companion. Sri Ramakrishna took a great teacher, Bhairabi Brahmani, who taught him sixty four disciplines of the Tantra. According to Tantra, we have six chakras in the physical body. We have kundalini power and that power needs to be awakened. When this power merges at the top of the head, sahasrara, the place of Shiva, one gets Samarasha Anubhuti, the union of my individual soul and the cosmic self. That is the whole purpose and the goal or the aim of tantra.

Look at this grand function. It is that great power, Shakti, which helped organize this celebration and it is the same power that inspired Swami Vivekananda to come and preach the universal message of unity. If you ask Swami Ishatmananda how he arranged this great function within two months, I am sure he would say, "I couldn't do it myself."

Now what is this power? This is the power of tantra. That is this chitshakti, the power which is in all of us. This great message of unity we also find in the tantra in the form of kundalini jaagaran. When our energy is awakened, we find the same thing there in all of us.

It happened to Sri Ramakrishna. I do not have time to deal with that, but you can read the Gospe of Sri Ramakrishna, where he gave a description of tantra. He describes in his own words in the Gospel, what tantra is, what Veda is, and Purana is. Then he added some new words: Satchitananda Bramha, Satchitananda Krishna, and Santchitananda Shiva.

Among the Westerners, John Woodroffe was the first serious person attempting to know this branch of knowledge. He practiced it also, and gave the West the two concepts of Siva and Shakti. Chitshakti is the highest goal in tantra, like Brahman is in Vedanta.

The Vedantic tradition takes us to the highest goal through a practice of neti-neti, or “not this, not that.”

So these are the three branches of spiritual knowledge which Sri Ramakrishna beautifully reconciled and combined. He said, “The Truth established in the Vedas, the Puranas, and the Tantras is but one Satchidananda. In the Vedas It is called Brahman, in the Puranas It is called Krishna, Rama, and so on, and in the Tantras It is called Shiva.”

Sri Ramakrishna did not know much English, but there are a few words he did use. Once in a discussion with a Vaishnava devotee, Sri Ramakrishna said about Vaisnava and Shakta that their goal is the same but their ways are different. Then he mentioned, that those who are really Vaishnava, they do not criticize Shakti. The Goswami, a Vaishnava devotee, said, “Shiva and Parvati are like our father and mother”. The moment Sri Ramakrishna heard this, he said, “Thank you – Father and Mother.”

This is Sri Ramakrishna, who gave this teaching of unity in and through everything, including tantra, which is not sometimes taken in good spirit around the world. But

there are some good aspects of tantra in the life of Sri Ramakrishna.

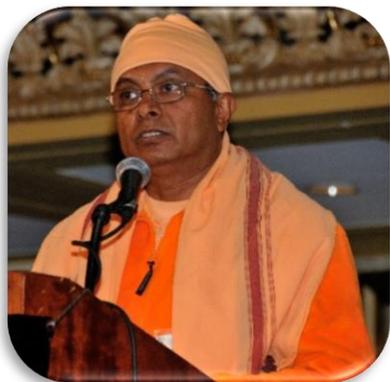
Before I conclude, I want to mention that we are talking about harmony. Harmony of what? Harmony of different religions and faith. But until there is some confusion how can there be harmony? Swami Vivekananda noticed it and he added before he gave this message, “in spite of resistance, harmony will come.” In our Ramakrishna Order, you can see all the Gods and Goddesses (Sri Ramakrishna, Jesus, and Buddha) are all on the same altar. I am waiting for that day – and maybe it will take couple of centuries to see – when all will come to respect each other.

I am coming from Portland. I was born in the land of Ganges and I am blessed in the land of Columbia. I would like to conclude with Swami Vivekananda’s words, “Hail Columbia, motherland of liberty! It has been given to thee, who never dipped her hand in her neighbor’s blood, who never found out that the shortest way of becoming rich was by robbing one’s neighbors, it has been given to thee to march at the vanguard of civilization with the flag of harmony.”



# THE UNIVERSAL VIVEKANANDA

## SWAMI BANESHANANDA



*Swami Baneshananda Minister-in-Charge, Vedanta Centre, Germany  
This lecture was delivered on Nov. 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at "Chicago Calling".*

There lived a young and efficient novice in a monastery. He was truly very efficient. One of the seniors jokingly said to him, 'You are alone equal to a hundred people!' When asked by someone to explain his statement the senior smiled and replied, 'He can disturb the sleep of one hundred people!' In a good and profound sense, Swami Vivekananda (hereafter also 'Swamiji' for short) was more than the novice of our story! He disturbed the 'sleep' of millions of people during his time and later. Someone thoughtfully remarked: if we read Swami Vivekananda's messages a sleeping man wakes up, a person who is sitting stands up and a person standing starts walking or running. Swamiji himself has said that the country [meaning India] has sunk in *Tamoguna* (slumber) in the plea of practising *Sattvaguna* (peace). Vivekananda has awakened the sleeping soul of every man and woman. He says: 'Teach yourselves, teach everyone his real nature, call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakens. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come and everything that is excellent will come when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.'

We are tempted to quote the famous saying of Romain Rolland in which in startling words he brings out the effect of Swamiji's messages: 'Vivekananda's words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his at thirty years distance without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shock, what transport, must have been produced when, in burning words, they

issued from the lips of the hero!'

The valued central theme of Swami Vivekananda's message was 'man'. Needless to mention that the term 'man' includes both women and men, free from any limiting adjuncts or qualifications like western or eastern, black or brown or white, Hindu or Christian or Mohammedan, first class or business class or economy class, and so on. In his zeal to convince us that we are divine, he did not forget to regard man as man with all his shortcomings, achievements, deficiencies, sufferings, successes and all. Precisely, Swamiji looked upon man as 'total man', leaving no part of his outside of his reckoning, as unimportant or without significance. This insight into the outer man and discovering him as non-different from the inner man were the great lesson he learnt from his Guru Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna once questioned: 'I see God when I close my eyes; can't I see Him when I open the eyes?' Based on his extensive research on the existence of God, Sri Ramakrishna re-confirmed the age-old Upanishadic truth that God is both immanent and transcendent; He is both in us and outside us; and He is both He and She, and also neither!

Swamiji, as young Narendranath, sat at the feet of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna and learnt very practical lessons of life. Sri Ramakrishna passed away in 1886. Narendranath and a few other young disciples of his embraced monastic life. Narendra took leave of his brother disciples and embarked upon the life of an itinerant monk.

During his travel he was guest in the palaces, in the houses of the rich, the middle class and the poor. After his extensive travel, mostly on foot, throughout the length and breadth of India, Swami Vivekananda's mind was troubled by something very special. He swam across the turbulent waters to a rock that rises in the Indian Ocean at the southern-most tip of Indian peninsula off the coast of Kanyakumari and sat in meditation. But most unusual for a traditional monk, he did not meditate on any God, but on the wretched condition of men below on the Earth and the nation. Days later, he said to an American questioner of his that he had not come there to preach any religion; that he had come to earn something for the poor in India. His close association with people, in both the east and the west, endowed him with extensive practical knowledge of the conditions humans are subjected to in living their life on the Earth.

William Earnest Hocking, a well-known and influential philosopher writes in his *Recollections of Swami Vivekananda*: 'What I could feel and understand was that this man was speaking from what he knew, not from what he had been told. He was well aware of the books; but he was more immediately aware of his own experience ... and what he said would have to be taken into account in any final world view.'

### **Definition of 'Man' according to Vedanta**

Great minds have developed many definitions/interpretations of 'man'. We know 'man' as '*social man*' being governed by 'the parameter of the material conditions prevailing in society' [Marx], '*economic man*' being governed by economic necessities [derived from the writings of Mill and Smith], '*political animal*' being governed by political will [Aristotle], and a '*creature driven by libido*' [Freud]. And some religions define 'man' as '*born sinner*'.

Vedanta declares that 'man' is divine. Swami Vivekananda confirms, 'Never forget

the glory of human nature. We are the greatest God that ever was or ever will be. Christs and Buddhas are but waves on the boundless ocean which I am.'

The truth always reverberates through the world of truth-seekers. At the end of his book, *What Is Life*, which is a study on the physical aspect of the living cell, Professor Erwin Schrödinger makes several significant observations regarding the philosophical implications of his study of life as a whole: 'The sum and substance of what he says is: (1) first 'my body functions as a pure mechanism, according to the laws of nature'; (2) second, 'I know, by incontrovertible direct experience, that I am directing its motions.' And (3) finally he goes on to say, 'Hence I am God, Almighty'. Life, according to him, has these three layers—physical, psychological and spiritual.

To my mind, Swamiji has a two-prong approach to this issue:

#### *(i) Inherent freedom of man:*

Swamiji presents the quintessence of Vedanta in two potent ways. First he says: 'Each soul is potentially divine.'

That means, freedom is our spiritual nature, our birth-right. This understanding is of vital importance. This is a message of Vedanta; this is a message of equality; and this is a problem / duty long neglected by us to our discredit that the modern world is coming to terms with now.

#### *(ii) Man's ability to manifest freedom:*

He continues to say: 'The goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal.' Here we are discovering a capability (a real CV) which is inherent (natural) and which enables us to harmoniously organize the incidental means, our situations, that help us achieve a goal.

The next formula presents a very subtle *programme*. Here the means and the capability are intertwined: 'Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy – by one, or more, or all of these – and be free [i.e. the joy of freedom is the goal].

This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.'

While the world has recognized problems concerning the controlling of outer Nature, it is yet to *combine* in its scope the fundamental part of our being, *the divinity of man*. Theoreticians are more concerned about *what* we do than *who* does it. At one place Swamiji has mentioned that all the wealth of the world cannot improve the condition of one little Indian village if the people there are not taught to help themselves! This type of awakening of the real man is necessary as a panacea for our current problems all over the world. All our systems are targeting training our children how to earn more and more money for enjoying a so-called comfortable life without adding value to life itself and to our symbiotic life-style. To say the least, money cannot be a substitute for life per se. Great social philosophies are failing to remove inequality because of this lop-sided approach that does not address the problem at its very root.

### **Global Problem**

It naturally followed that Swamiji looked upon human problems as global problems. It is an undeniable truth today that no problem can be dealt with in isolation. An economic ripple here or another there will soon have a global implication. As all assets remain marketable so also the liabilities! Over the past few decades humanity has woken up to the reality and necessity of organizing campaigns having global magnitudes. At that time when 'globalization' did not become current coin in our ideological space Swamiji validated a global view of life as the most vital issue. He says that there should be acceptance and not exclusion. The basic premise behind Vivekananda's concept of universality is the concept of universal equality of humankind.

### **A Grand synthesis of East and West**

Vivekananda wanted a harmony of all human energies, Eastern and Western. One

kind of human excellence has been developed in Asia and influenced it, and the other in the ancient Greek, which has influenced the whole of the West.

No culture is perfect; each culture has specialized only in some values and neglected other values due to that very specialization; and all these separate world cultures are essentially aspects of one total human culture. So they are complementary, not contradictory. According to the psychologist William James: both the cultures have laid stress on the main components of our character-- physical health and well-being, depth of thought, strength of conviction, faith in oneself, the humanistic impulses, and practical efficiency.

When we read that Vivekananda is passionately speaking of Indian problems we surely do not fail to discern one special point in it: He always highlighted Indian problems as *part and parcel* of global problems. Swami Vivekananda makes a significant statement with regard to why it is necessary for Indian culture to survive: 'Shall India die? Then from the world all spirituality will be extinct, all moral perfection will be extinct, all sweet-souled sympathy for religion will be extinct, all ideality will be extinct; and in its place will reign the duality of lust and luxury as the male and female deities, with money as its priest, fraud, force, and competition its ceremonies, and the human soul its sacrifice.

Such a thing can never be. The power of suffering is infinitely greater than the power of doing; the power of love is infinitely of greater potency than the power of hatred.'

Sir Arnold Toynbee has something more to share with us. Surely, these are not over-enthusiastic remarks when he says: 'It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a Western beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in self-destruction of the human race. At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way of salvation is the ancient Hindu way.

Here we have the attitude and spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together in to a single family.'

There is a nice story. It is that kind of a story that contain very practical lesson. Once a small child tore into pieces a map of the World. She took the pieces to her mother. Naturally, the mother was upset. She asked the child to join the pieces and make it all right. The poor child accepted the challenge. But to her mother's surprise, she joined the pieces correctly in no time! Mom wanted to know how she could do it so soon. The child replied: Mom, look at the other side of the paper. There is a picture of a man. I joined the pieces to correct the picture of the man and the map on the other side was set right!



## ARISE, AWAKE, AND STOP NOT



On October 31, 2003, at age 13, Bethany Hamilton went for a morning surf when a 14 foot tiger shark attacked her severing her left arm just below the shoulder. Friends helped paddle her back to shore and rushed her to Hospital. By the time she arrived there she had lost over 60% of her blood and was in hypovolemic shock. She spent a week in recovery before being released.

Despite the trauma of the incident, Bethany was determined to return to surfing. Less than a month after the incident, she returned to her board. She taught herself to surf with one arm and just over a year later won her first National title. In 2007, Bethany realized her dream of surfing professionally and since then her story has been told in an autobiography and in the 2011 film, *Soul Surfer*.

Bethany has become a source of inspiration to millions through her story of determination, faith and hope. Bethany is involved in numerous charitable efforts, including her own foundation, Friends of Bethany, which supports shark attack survivors, traumatic amputees, and serves to inspire others through her life story. Now as a professional surfer, wife, Christian, motivational speaker, and healthy lifestyle advocate, Bethany continues to touch and inspire lives globally.

*Courtesy: bethanyhamilton.com, Wikipedia*



Jodi Ann Bickley has written more than 3,000 letters by hand as part of her One Million Lovely Letters project, Bickley writes letters of support to strangers going through tough times.

The idea began in her own string of misfortunes. An award-winning young poet, she was bitten by a tick which led to and in turn a small stroke and was then diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome. She pulled back from the brink of depression and suicidal thoughts only by a push notification from a cartoon makeover app.

"This thing shone on my phone saying, 'We need our facials, big night.' I just laughed and thought if I can laugh at these girls on my phone then I'm definitely not ready to pull the plug just yet," she said.

Realizing she needed something to do in her bedridden hours, she decided to turn a lifelong habit into a formal project. She has been leaving notes since she was young. "...anywhere I thought that maybe someone might need a little bit of cheering up, reassurance or just a reminder that actually they are pretty lovely."

Soon, she set up a website and put out a call for anyone interested in receiving a heartfelt letter. Within an hour, she received 100 requests. One Million Lovely Letters was born. More than a year later, the project is still going strong, with Bickley providing handwritten reassurances to single mothers, stressed-out students and victims of bad breakups, among others.

"If I can actually talk one person down from the curb, then that's a success," she said.

*Courtesy: The Mirror*

# HOW TO BE A BETTER STUDENT

Welcome to the Youth Corner. This column will feature inspirational messages for the youth, addressing issues such as success in studies, development of will-power and memory, concentration, competition, and other challenges that are faced inside and outside the classroom. You are invited to write in to [ezine@chicagovedanta.org](mailto:ezine@chicagovedanta.org) with questions that we will attempt to address.

**Q: Is success in studies under one's control? Despite my best efforts, I am not able to succeed.**

It is commonly accepted that success is relative to the performance of others. If others do not perform well, we come out on top. While there is some validity to this view, on an absolute scale, this is an incorrect perception, because we have to compete against our own weaknesses and our lower self. There is much to be said on this. However, a more natural question that arises is about how much success is under one's control, given that the playing field is intrinsically uneven. Some students have more aptitude for the subject matter than other students do, and some students come from a privileged background, which enables them to devote more time and resources to studies. According to one belief, there is some degree of flexibility in the outcome based on one's efforts, to the extent of 25 percent, while 75 percent of the control over the outcome is predetermined by our past actions or *karmas*. Yet, one has to try one's level best.

Consider the analogy of a cow tied to a tree with a rope of a certain length. She can graze the grass within the entire area of the circle whose radius is determined by the length of the rope, or a part thereof, or just sit lazily and not graze at all. But she cannot reach the grass beyond the perimeter of the circle. The length of the rope represents the

maximum amount of flexibility we can exercise in our studies. Each student may have a rope of a different length. The lack of flexibility, to the extent of 75 percent of the outcome, is determined by our past karmas and remains an important and hidden factor. The attitude we should adopt is to do our best and leave the rest, in the spirit of the game that is life. Hard work and effort are keys to success, and one must reach out to make every effort within one's sphere of reach.

Olympic athletes train long hours, day after day without a break and for years on end, to represent their country and attain success. Skilled musicians spend endless hours in practice right from childhood. Indeed, to be successful in any profession, there is no substitute for hard work.

Although one must do one's best, one must not worry about the outcome, and not even be attached to an expected result. We all do actions with a purpose or objective in mind. It seems absurd to act without any purpose in mind. All sane people have an objective for each action they perform, and it is our right to perform such actions. However, we must not be mentally attached to the outcome we expect, otherwise we get trapped by being bound to the fruits of the action. At a practical level, we keep worrying and fretting about the outcome, which is very unproductive and prevents us from living in the present. And if the outcome is not as per our expectation, we get disappointed.

At a spiritual level, we are taught that only by being mentally detached from the fruits of the action can we gain liberation from the action, which is an ultimate goal in life. Further, we have no right to expect any outcome as that is part of the divine plan over which we have no authorship..

Besides our own past actions, there are many unknown factors, such as the efforts and past actions of others, over which we have no control or even knowledge of. Just as in a bicycle race, we have no control over the speeds of other bicycles. And we need to remember that for every Albert Einstein, there are numerous other scientists who, in comparison, have little to show in a lifetime. Every student has a unique background, and thus at a different relative advantage or disadvantage. If success is partially predetermined by one's own past karmas or deeds, it should not make us despondent and fatalistic. When we encounter a few crushing failures in life, we begin to believe in destiny and begin to question the efficacy of self-effort. However, self-effort is of paramount importance as it is the only way that one can hope to improve one's own lot. As is often said, failures are the stepping-stones to success.

To illustrate this point, we can take inspiration from the story of Robert Bruce, who was a Scottish king. Although a very successful ruler, he was once defeated in battle and escaped to the woods. There he took refuge in a cave. While sitting there in humiliating defeat, he observed a spider trying to climb to the roof of the cave. Six times, the spider fell down in its attempt. However, on the seventh attempt, the spider succeeded in reaching the roof of the cave. King Bruce took heart from the spider's persistence, and returned to rally his forces and win against the enemy. This story exemplifies the maxim: Try and try again, until you succeed.

In our analogy of the cow above, continued self-effort gradually results in the lengthening of the rope that ties the cow to the tree. It may be a while before the results begin to show. But no effort is wasted; even if we do not see immediate results, the effort is stored in the storehouse of our karmas and will yield results in the future – in either this life or a future birth. This is the long-term architecting of one's own success.



*LOVE FOR AN OBJECT DEVELOPS  
CONCENTRATION . A  
CONCENTRATED MIND FORGETS  
ABOUT OTHER EXISTENCE.*

# BETTER HEALTH THROUGH YOGA

Swagata Saha

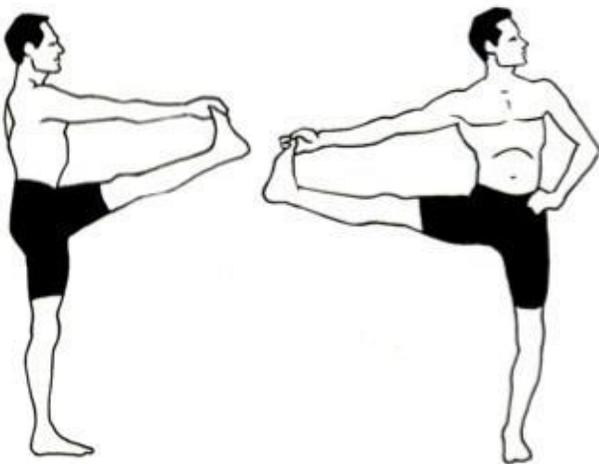
In the last issue I showed you the Garudasana and as I had mentioned, in this issue I will introduce the next asana:

**Utthita hasta padangustasana** (Extended hand to big toe pose)

Difficulty level: 2

How to get into this posture:

1. Stand in tadasana or mountain pose
2. Pick the left leg up and keep it vertical
3. Stretch the sole and toes of the left foot up in front of you or to the left side (see picture)
4. Extend both the arms on either side and hold the left ankle with the fingers of the left hand
5. Stretch the whole body without raising the right hip
6. Keep the head straight, look straight ahead, and breathe evenly in ujjaiyi breath
7. Stay in this pose for about 20 seconds
8. With an exhalation, bring the arms and left leg down
9. Repeat the pose with the other side



**Utthita hasta padangustasana**

## **Benefits:**

- ❖ - This pose is particularly useful for individuals at high risk for osteoporosis.
- ❖ - This pose improves balance and symmetry in the body
- ❖ - This pose strengthens the muscles in the lower back, legs and feet
- ❖ - It also strengthens the bones of the legs and the ankles

## **Introduction to Surya Namaskara**

Sometimes we may experience stiffness in our bodies because of blockages in the flow of prana and accumulation of toxins. When the prana flows excessively through the Ida channel, the mind becomes overactive and one suffers from disorders such as anxiety and stress. On the other hand, if the prana flows excessively through the Pingala channel, the body becomes overactive and one becomes restless. The regular practice of Surya Namaskara (Sun salutation) enables the flow of prana within the body in a balanced manner, thus eliminating toxins and bringing about a healthy glow in the body. The Surya Namaskara is an effective naturopathic treatment which not only helps prevent disease but also has a curative effect on a variety of disease states. The Surya Namaskara consists of a set of twelve simple exercises or asanas, and in the next issue I will provide you with a brief description of each of these twelve steps involved in performing the Surya Namaskara.

*Questions or feedback?*

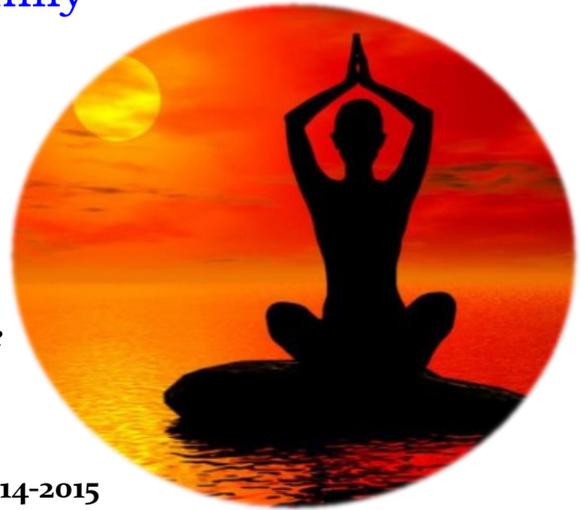
*The author Swagata Saha can be contacted at [ezine@chicagovedanta.org](mailto:ezine@chicagovedanta.org)*

# Health for Whole Family

## Register

Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago will start  
Weekend Classes on Yoga and Meditation:

*These classes are suitable for most people regardless of fitness level, health conditions or age. Teachers will provide modifications for your unique needs in this non-competitive environment.*



### Foundation in Yoga Program 2014-2015

*\*\*\* Prerequisite to the 2015-2016 Intermediate Yoga Program*

***Relieve and prevent degenerative diseases and conditions like arthritis, high blood pressure, and back problems!***

***Increase lung capacity and relieve stress with foundational breathing practices and meditations!***

This year long yoga program lays a solid foundation in Asana, Pranayama and Meditation practices. It starts from the beginning level with sukshma vyayama “subtle exercise” that removes blockages that prevent the free flow of energy in the body and mind. These exercises open the joints, relax muscles, improve hip flexibility, increase core strength and vitality, and develop awareness so that one can move into more advanced practices with better alignment and attention to finer details. Once the body and mind are properly prepared, carefully and systematically we begin to introduce classical asana, culminating in learning how to safely practice Surya Namaskar in a way that is conducive to your unique body and mental constitution.

### Children’s Yoga Program : “Radiant Child”

***The body is made to do yoga. Yoga postures and angles create certain pressures to stimulate the body and brain, making the necessary changes to become a healthy, happy and whole person!***

Yoga can be very helpful for children, increasing their self awareness, building their self esteem, and strengthening their bodies. This yoga is dynamic, bursting with imaginary animals and stories that capture the children’s delight as they become healthy and relaxed. Yoga for children is creative movement with the ingredients of yoga – breath awareness, mind-body fitness, and the opportunity to experience the “self within.”

### Special Meditation Program

One hour class will start with twenty minutes of Raja Yoga Meditation and Vedic Chanting using the Himalayan Singing Bowl. The purpose of meditation is to hold the body perfectly still and relaxed. The intensity of concentration in meditation is much more important than the length of time one sits. After mastering the art of abdominal breathing in the early sessions, we will slowly move on to Pranayama in the advanced sessions.

For registration write to us : [ezine@chicagovedanta.org](mailto:ezine@chicagovedanta.org)

## Health for Whole Family

### Teachers for Upcoming Weekend Classes @ the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago

Kalyani (Amy Eley) has been practicing yoga and meditation since 1996 and has been teaching yoga classes, workshops and private lessons since 2002. Over the years, she has trained in many different styles of yoga and has taught hundreds of students of all ages, backgrounds and fitness levels, ranging from very beginners to yoga instructors.

**1996-2002** studied Meditation and Yoga Philosophy with Ma Vandana

**2002** Kundalini Yoga Teacher Training Certification at Spirit Rising Yoga Center in Chicago IL (200 hr level)

**2006** Kali Natha Yoga Teacher Training Certification at the Kashi School of Yoga in Sebastian FL (200 hr level)

**2014** began her formal training in the system of Satyananda Yoga (Bihar School of Yoga) at the Yoga Academy of North America where she is currently working towards her 500 hr Yoga Teacher Training Certification.



Swagata Saha is a life-long yoga enthusiast who loves to share her knowledge and passion for yoga with everyone is a certified Yoga Teacher (RYT-200). She received her training in yoga in Kolkata, India and in San Francisco, California. She is proficient in Hatha Yoga, Viniyasa Yoga, Ageless Yoga, Anusara Yoga, Prenatal Yoga, and Therapeutic Yoga. Her yoga classes also incorporate instruction in pranayama, Raja Yoga meditation, and Vedic chanting. She is also an independent practitioner of Vedic astrology.

Gauri Jaya has enjoyed teaching yoga classes to children and adults alike since 2006. She has a very compassionate, patient and light hearted nature that is adored by all her students.

**1978** Introduced to yoga and took various yoga classes while working as an RN and raising her family

**2006** Kundalini Yoga Teacher Training Certification at Spirit Rising Yoga Center in Chicago IL (200hr level)

**2006** “Radiant Child” Children’s Yoga Teacher Training Certification **2009** Level 2 Kundalini Yoga Conscious Communication at Spirit Rising Yoga Center in Chicago

**2013** Kali Natha Yoga Teacher Training and Certification at the Kashi School of Yoga in Sebastian FL (200 hour).



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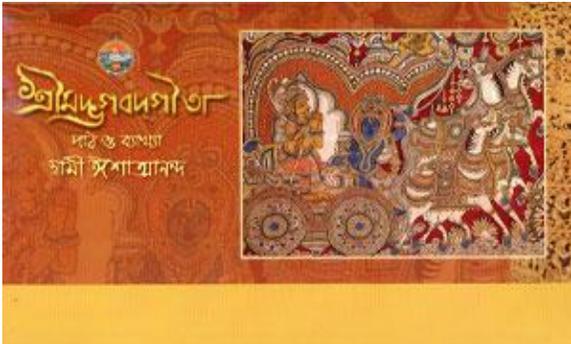
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*A unique interpretation of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna by Swami Ishatmananda  
Collection of 24 lectures (\$5)*

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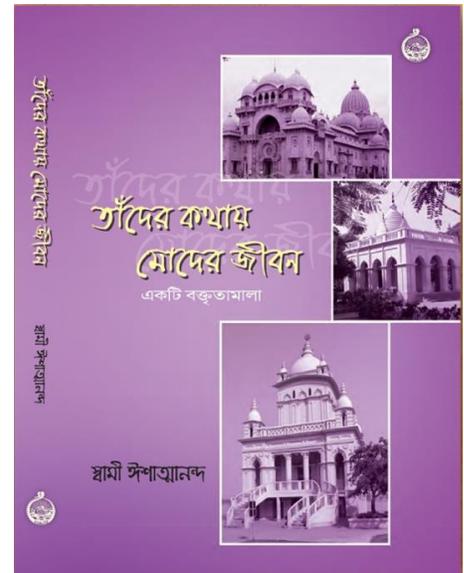
*The human mind, its nature & the results of its control have been explained based on Patanjali's  
Yoga Sutras by Swami Ishatmananda. Collection of 24 lectures (\$5)*



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Documentaries, various DVDs, and spiritual mementos are also available.