

Pravrajika Vrajaprana

(Revered Pravrajika Vrajaprana is a nun at the Sarada Convent of the Vedanta Society of Southern California. As a part of the celebration of the completion of 40 years of Vivekananda Vidyapith, Pravrajika Vrajaprana was invited to visit the Vidyapith and give a talk on "Vedanta in Practice: The Life of Sister Nivedita", on Saturday, March 11, 2017 in the evening. She joined Vidyapith's Morning Prayer, addressed the assembly of students and teachers and gave her blessings. The following address has been prepared for publication from a video recording.)

Morning Blessing

It is a true inspiration to be here at Vivekananda Vidyapith. I have known about this place for many years. I have known the graduates of Vivekananda Vidyapith. But, this is my first opportunity to be here. For us, among the monastic community we have been so inspired by the work that Uncle and Aunty have done here. It is one type of renunciation that we monastic people do and Uncle and Aunty have shown another type of renunciation - total sacrifice and complete unselfishness. What they have done for last 40 years is an inspirational for everyone in the Ramakrishna Mission. So, I hope you take advantage of what has been given here because what you have here is quite extraordinary. I hope you appreciate that. It is an inspiration for me to be here and I know it was same for other monks of Ramakrishna Mission. It is amazing how a couple of people's sincere and whole-hearted dedication can change the world in such a beautiful and sweet way. It was started in a small form and has become so great.

I hope you realize how fortunate you are. Swami Vivekananda came to the West in 1893. He had a very difficult time. He was not used to this type of weather. I came from Santa Barbara. It was 85 degrees Fahrenheit there. When I arrived at Newark Airport I looked at my watch and it said 17 degrees Fahrenheit! I could not believe it. Imagine coming from India in this weather, being the only Indian, and having no friend except for Thakur and Holy Mother! He came to this country and went through lots of difficulties. He worked very hard so that we

could have a place like this. He gave his life-blood and spent so much energy in this country. Why did he do that? He could have done anything in India. Because he wanted to give a message here that makes a worldwide impact. Each one of you is here because of Swamiji. Each one here is a very special one. You have here special grace of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Saradadevi and Swami Vivekananda. It is a tremendous blessing to be here in a spiritual environment like this. How beautiful was the chanting. From the students' facial expressions it is very clear that you are all joyfully growing here intellectually and spiritually. For you to thrive here shows how wonderful "Sanskaras" you have. You have been brought here to do an extraordinary work in this part of the world. It is not easy to live a spiritual dedicated life in this part of the world, but you have great leaders who have shown that it can be done. By that kind of service you can do great work here.

Swami Vivekananda came here to show how to live a dedicated life. He had nothing for himself. People here also have shown that they did not think of themselves but worked for the future generation. Every single one of you have come here as a gift to the world. You may not know what it is yet. But, each one of you has innate strength, courage, purity, and love. If you harness that then you will be able to do so much good to the world and you will be able to leave the world a better place. Not many people have that gift. So many people live to take something from the world. Because of the training you have received here and with your parents, you will do good to the world.

In the evening we are celebrating Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabu's life. He lived a pure and dedicated life. There is a wonderful poem of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, which says,

"Chant the name of the Lord and his glory unceasingly
That the mirror of the heart may be wiped clean,
And quenched that mighty forest fire, worldly lust,
Raging furiously within."

'Chant the name of the Lord and His glories unceasingly.'

That is how you started the day here. The chanting you did was excellent. All were in unison and harmony. By chanting the name of the Lord and His glories wipes the mirror of the heart clean. What is the mirror of the heart? It is right here. We all have that. It is the presence of divine within us, called the Atman. Why the Atman does needs to be clean? The Atman is pure, but the cloud of ignorance has covered the Atman, we need it to be clean. When the cloud of ignorance covers our Atman, we become greedy, angry, mean and selfish and we do not want to think about others. When by chanting the name of the Lord, our heart becomes clean, wonderful things happen. Then we know who we are and we find incredible amount of strength, and light in the form of knowledge and purity within us. The worldly lust ranging within makes us selfish and mean and we forget the Oneness lying within all. The one beautiful truth that Hindu tradition has given the world is “Oneness of Existence.” There is only One Infinite Reality called Atman or Brahman. Because of the ignorance we forget the divine presence lying within us and we forget the luminous reality which unites us all.

Wherever you are, here, or in your school or on the playground, remember the presence of the Lord and remember the Gita verses you chanted. That will give tremendous strength when you least expect it. When you are going through a hard time, these Gita verses will come back to you and remind you, ‘Yes! Yes! That is the Truth.’ In school when people give you hard time, remember who you are and where you are coming from. Remember that your true nature is Infinite and divine Reality and you have infinite strength and infinite love within you. If negative message comes to you, then you tell yourself ‘No! No! It is not my problem, it is their problem.’ We all have this noble birth-right which we all forget. Your ability to come here and learn who you really are is a great gift. Don’t forget your true divine identity. Take the advantage of this wonderful opportunity given to you to learn about your true identity. All these teachings you are learning will stay with you and help you for the rest of your life. All the wonderful friends you make here will stay for the rest of your life.

We had a wonderful swami in Seattle. His name was Swami Vividishananda. He made all his disciples memorize Bhagavad Gita. He made them memorize mantras from the Upanishad’s and bhajans and songs. He said, ‘You never know when your mind would be your only companion.’ It happened that he had a stroke and he was in bed for four to five years. He

could not communicate with anyone outside. Swami Asheshananda, a disciple of Holy Mother, said that he was communicating when verses were chanted or life-incidents of direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna were mentioned. During that time all the verses he had memorized were his companion.

When you are in a school or going in a bus and you might feel you are alone, at that time these verses you had memorized will come back and become your companion. Bhagavad Gita says that our mind can be our greatest friend and our greatest enemy. You are in a position to make your mind as your greatest friend. This is the greatest gift that anyone can give you.

Thus, by chanting when we cleanse our mind, then we remember our true divine identity and we will have more strength than we can imagine. Then, we will be able to do great service to the world and our life will be blessed for ourselves and everyone around us.

I thank all of you for having me here. It is a great source of inspiration to me.