

- **Yesterday was Seva Saturday:** Two pizzas and two salads worth of devotees helped “winterize” your Center. SS is 2nd Sat of each month, from 10am to 2pm. No need to be here the entire 4 hours. Come when you can, stay as you’re able.
- **On Saturday January 25th** we will celebrate the birthdays of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Brahmananda. We’ll start t 11am with a brief talk on these two great souls, who founded the Ramakrishna Order and began its mission work. The Puja, conducted by Aditya Chaturvedi, from 11:30-12:30, followed by prasad lunch in the Monastery. Food to be offered must be in the kitchen by 11am!
- **Swami Harinamanandaji** will be here on Sunday, Jan 26 to lead a Workshop on the Chandi. Starts at 10am, ends at 1pm, followed by lunch with the Swami. Please bring your own brown-bag lunch.

- In February, **Swami Nirakaranandaji** of the St Louis center, will be with us on Sat the 15th & Sun the 16th to lead a weekend-long retreat on the teachings, the life & the achievements of Adi Shankaracharya. Detail in e-news & web.

## **CHANT • SONG • WELCOME • TOPIC**

January is a month for study of Raja Yoga, a spiritual path often called the yoga of meditation. As a raja yogi, you use ancient, proven spiritual techniques to quiet your mind and gain control of your attention.

Regular daily practice of Raja Yoga increases your ability to concentrate, and may lead to meditation. This can unite you with the Divine Presence, the source of your being, and liberate you from the cycle of rebirth and death.

### **A Great Silence**

We'll start today's talk with this prayer from the Upanishads — a favorite of Swami Swahananda (*introduce*):

*O LORD*

*You are the source of infinite energy; fill me with that energy.*

*You are the source of infinite strength; endow me with that strength.*

*You are the source of infinite courage; inspire me with that courage.*

*You are the source of infinite fortitude; grant me that fortitude.*

Why would you pray for these attributes, a few the Lord's treasures: energy, strength, courage, and fortitude? They are needed to live your daily life well, surely; yet even more so to pursue Raja Yoga — to actually practice the ancient, proven spiritual techniques that can quiet your mind and give you control of your attention.

A short review of those techniques, as taught to us by Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutra*:  
Yama - Niyama - Asana - Pranayama -  
Pratyahara - Dharana - Dhyana - Samadhi

Samadhi is the Great Silence: When you have begun to master these techniques, which slowly and slowly enable you to set aside all the obstructions to the truth of your being, you somehow slip into that Great Silence.

What is there is inexpressible; yet, all our teachers tell us that, having visited there, everything changes.

What is meant by “everything changes?” For that definition, let’s talk a little about what the “everything” is, that changes: This is from Swami Vivekananda’s book, *Raja-Yoga*:

***“Yoga is restraining the mind - stuff (Chitta) from taking various forms (Vrittis).”***

*A good deal of explanation is necessary here. We have to understand what Chitta is, and what the Vrittis are ...*

*The [sense] organs (Indriyas), together with the mind (Manas), the determinative faculty (Buddhi), and egoism (Ahamkara), form the group called the Antahkarana (the internal instrument). They are but various processes in the mind - stuff, called Chitta. The waves of thought in the Chitta are called Vrittis (literally, "whirlpool").*

*What is thought? Thought is a force, as is gravitation or repulsion. From the **infinite storehouse of force in nature**, the instrument called Chitta takes hold of some, absorbs it and sends it out as thought ... You are the only sentient being; mind is only the instrument through which you **catch** the external world. Take this book; as a book it does not exist outside, what exists outside is unknown and unknowable. The unknowable furnishes the suggestion that gives a blow to the mind, **and the mind gives out the reaction in the form of a book ...***

*The real universe is the occasion of the reaction of the mind. A book form, or an elephant form, or a man form, is not outside ... Now we understand what is meant by these Vrittis. The real man is behind the mind; the mind is the instrument in his hands; it is his intelligence that is percolating through the mind ...*

*Thus you understand what is meant by Chitta. It is the mind - stuff, and Vrittis are the waves and ripples rising in it when external causes impinge on it. **These Vrittis are our universe.**” (EOQ)*

And so these Vrittis are the “everything” that you experience. It follows that when you learn to **still** these Vrittis — the goal of Raja Yoga’s practices — **your universe disappears**. What replaces it, according to the Yogis, is not darkness and emptiness, but a Great Silence: Radiant, unbounded Consciousness, knowledge unspeakable of the blissful identity of Atman and Brahman.

**Pointing directly at that goal, Swami Vivekananda famously said:**

*“Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship or psychic control or philosophy – by one or more or all of these and be free. **This is the whole of religion.** Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms are but secondary details.”*

**Here’s a quote from the *Katha Upanishad* (Swami Vivekananda’s favorite):**

*“It is but few who hear about the Self. Fewer still dedicate their lives to its Realization. Wonderful is the one Who speaks of the Self. Rare are they Who make it the supreme goal of their life. Blessed are they who, through an illumined Teacher, attain to Self-realization.”*

**Swami Vivekananda deeply yearned for each of us** to access the illimitable source of knowledge within — our everlasting birthright — and manifest our divinity. He burned through a life of just 39 years, making his yearning a reality for you and for me, by leaving us his roadmaps to liberation: the four yogas.

Raja Yoga — the yoga of psychic control, of meditation and other special techniques — is one gateway to our birthright. *“You will know the truth,”* said Jesus, *“and the truth will set you free.”*

Here is a tanka poem, by DosLobos

*My mind, saying the  
sacred syllables guru  
gave me, somehow slipped  
into a Great Silence and  
was stilled. Nothing more to say.*

**Q&A & Commentary**  
**CLOSING CHANT**