

Vedic Vision Society: 'Prism of Consciousness Pt II'

By **Sneha Saraf**
STAFF WRITER

We continued the lecture "Prism of Consciousness" by reviewing some of the key points. Speaker Nityananda Pran began by briefly covering the law of karma – for every action, there is a reaction. He also re-explained the idea of the three modes of material nature and how they influence us based on our karma. These three modes of nature give rise to the variety that we witness amongst all life.

The three modes are sattva (goodness), rajas (passion), and tamas (ignorance), as was discussed in the previous lecture. They affect the consciousness of the soul, which in its original form is otherwise pure. The speaker went on to explain that, due to the modes of nature, our sense of identity transforms into that of a particular species – and this effect is known as "conditioning". For example, a soul in the body of a tiger acts and behaves like a tiger; but in the body of an insect, that same soul

will act and behave like an insect; and so on.

Another example given is that of us as students at IIT. When we are on campus and somebody asks who we are, chances are we'd respond "I'm a student", "I'm a junior Chem E", etc. But once we step off campus, we may not be as likely to respond in that manner. Rather, we might say "I am the child of so and so", "I'm a man", "I'm a woman", etc. When we are in certain circumstances, we begin to identify with those circumstances. But, as may be recalled from previous discussions, the true identity of self never changes. It is beyond time, place, and circumstance because it is spiritual.

The whole path of a spiritual journey is to regain our natural state beyond the influences of the three modes of nature and to understand that our true nature is that of an eternal, cognizant, and blissful soul. And if this is our true nature, then our activities should be on the basis of who we are rather than who we think we are.

Therefore, the whole idea of spirituality is to move from material activities to

spiritual activities. Nityananda Pran explained that this process begins when we change our consciousness, because as consciousness changes, activities change. In all other categories of species, this is not possible because they have no volition (or free will). Humans, on the other hand, are the only species that can choose which activities they want or don't want to do. Of course, there are certain activities that we have no control over – such as birth, death, old age, disease, going to the bathroom, etc. – however, our life is more than just that. There are other activities that we choose to perform; and this is where our choices make a difference in our lives.

The speaker elaborated by describing how actions are caused by desire; desire is influenced by consciousness (in terms of choice); consciousness is affected by the three modes of material nature; the modes of nature operate as a result of our karma; and karmic reaction is based on our action. This is known as "the cycle of life" – or, more specifically, the karmic cycle. The key to escaping this cycle is to act

in such a way that there is no karmic reaction.

When one is beyond the three modes, one is said to be in a state of Transcendence. In the state of Transcendence, the soul still performs activities in this material realm, but the consciousness in its natural spiritual state, not affected by the modes and reactions of one's karma.

Nityananda Pran concluded the lecture by reviewing the characteristics of action performed under the modes of nature. In the mode of ignorance, actions are performed neither for others nor for the self – it is simply destructive; in the mode of passion, actions are performed only for the self; in the mode of goodness, actions are performed for others and for themselves. But it is only in the state of Transcendence that actions are performed as an offering to the Absolute Truth – every action is "God-centric".

Next week the discussion will be dedicated to examining and understanding the law of karma. All discussions are video-recorded and available on facebook.com/vedicvis.

EWB-IIT, AIChE-IIT receive regional, national recognition

By **Utsav Gandhi**
CAMPUS EDITOR

IIT's very own student organization, Engineers without Borders was recently named the 2012 EWB-USA Regional Premier Chapter for the Great Lakes Region, edging out over 40 other student chapters. They will move on to the national competition as one of seven student chapters eligible to win the coveted title of 2013 EWB-USA Premier Student Chapter. At the same time, former chapter president and recent IIT alumna Dhara Shah (BME, 2012) was named president of the EWB Great Lakes Region, having served previously as Illinois State Representative. The IIT chapter was recognized specifically for the group's large student base active in multiple civic engagement projects, participation in the activities of the Chicagoland local chapter, and for showing exemplary courage in deciding to close out of the long-running Haiti program. Opportunities with EWB are not

just restricted to engineers! It takes committed individuals from all backgrounds to "build a better world, one community at a time," the EWB motto. Students are encouraged to check out the chapter website (ewbusait.moonfruit.com) to learn more about projects to get involved in, get onto the group mailing list and attend the next general body meeting.

The EWB Great Lakes Regional Conference, where the award was announced, was a very productive weekend in more than one way. The small town setting of Mt. Pleasant, MI and the suburban college campus of Central Michigan University provided an intimate environment to carry out positively stimulating conversations with some of the premier EWB professionals in the country. The sessions were tailored to suit the needs of contemporary challenges faced by student chapters; and most of the workshops were relevant to student organizational skills even beyond EWB. Grant writing, editing and designing social media tools for both inter- and intra-communication among chap-

ters, health and safety assessment training for implementation trips, an introduction to EWB project management (very relevant to almost any professional sphere, and facilitated by IIT alumna Kat Weissman!), and the basics of intercultural communication (increasingly relevant in today's rapidly globalizing world) were some of the key highlights.

The American Institute of Chemical Engineers (AIChE) also recently recognized Illinois Institute of Technology's AIChE Student Chapter for its exceptional level of participation in AIChE activities, the quality and regularity of its meetings and its local, regional, and national participation. The recognition comes in the form of an award to be announced at the AIChE Annual Meeting in late October.

It is not unusual to see general body members actively attending most chapter events and meetings; along with participating in mentorship programs and making time for social events like 'Dinner with Professors' or 'ChemE Olympics'. The chapter also benefits from the excellent guidance and

support provided by its faculty adviser, Associate Professor of Chemical and Biological Engineering Donald Chmielewski. "This award is simply a reflection of the sustained level of dedication exhibited by these students.

Week in and week out, they plan, organize and manage events benefiting their student members, the ChBE Department and the profession at large.

They are examples of IIT's best and brightest." AIChE is the world's leading organization for chemical engineering professionals, with more than 40,000 members from over 90 countries.

To learn more about ways to get involved with IIT's AIChE Student Chapter, which promotes professional development and networking opportunities for chemical engineering students, please visit the chapter website, <http://iitaiche.org/>. Some of its members will be leaving for Pittsburgh, PA this upcoming weekend for the Annual National Conference; hoping to come back even more energized to take the chapter to greater heights.

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Shimer College

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3:15pm



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* or Plato or Machiavelli or Descartes or Shakespeare or Tolstoy or Marx or Freud or Woolf or Ellison or MLK or