



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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Newsletter May 2026

Words to Inspire

"Happiness will never come to those who fail to appreciate what they already have. All suffering is caused by ignorance. People inflict pain on others in the selfish pursuit of their own happiness or satisfaction." -----Gautam Buddha

The Ramakrishna Movement and foundation of Belur Math

From the book, The Early history of the Ramakrishna Movement, by Swami Prabhananda

The Movement that had its genesis at the Dakshineswar temple flowed on to settle at Baranagore via Baghbazar, Shyampukur and the Cossipore garden-house. Then it resumed its flow, reaching Alambazar. In its last year at Alambazar, the Movement took a turn—in its functional aspect as well as geographical location—and crossed over the Ganga to Belur village. From Dakshineswar, it took the Movement, about a quarter of a century to reach Belur Math. Viewing the Movement's history with the aid of hindsight suggests that the land at Belur may have been predestined for its present use. Holy Mother Sarada Devi lived at Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house for about a year and a half. One moonlit evening, sitting on the garden-house's bathing-ghat leading to the Ganga, she had a vision mentioned earlier, and therein she foresaw a very bright future for the Ramakrishna movement. Sarada Devi, who was worshipped by Sri Ramakrishna himself as the representative of Tripurāsundari and who was adored by all as Sri Ramakrishna's Sakti, performed intense and austere spiritual practices, particularly during this period of her life. The Mother's statement itself intimates as much: 'Ah! How did I live there? What a quiet place, one always feels like meditating! So Naren was keen to have a place there.' Thereafter the Holy Mother lived at Nilambar Babu's garden house and at the 'Leggett House' within the precincts of Belur Math. She sanctified the Math land by her presence at least three times before and a number of times after the Math had been formally transferred to this site. Mother did not tell anyone about her vision at that time. Later, when the land was acquired for the Math, she revealed it in the context of some discussions. 'The Master's desire made it possible to fix the land. It was he who had selected the land for the Math.' Later, extolling the glories of Belur, she said: 'He for whom one makes journeys to Benares sits there at Dakshineswar

and Belur.' It was Holy Mother who alone could appreciate the greatness and spiritual significance of the place.

As early as the Baranagore days, the future location of the permanent Math was revealed to the pure mind of Swami Vivekananda. One day while standing with some of his brother-disciples at the Baranagore ferry ghāt, he said, 'Something tells me that our permanent Math will be in the neighbourhood across the river.

Part of the sprawling land of the present Belur Math had been sanctified by the touch of Sri Ramakrishna's feet. The log depot of the King of Nepal was near Belur's Kathgola ghāt. Viswanath Upadhaya, who was affectionately nicknamed 'Captain' by Sri Ramakrishna, was the royal representative. Responding to Captain's loving invitation, the Master visited the site one day and was pleased to partake of sweets offered to him.

Sri Ramakrishna, through his intense spiritual practice, transformed the stone image of the Divine Mother Kali installed by Rani Rasmani on the eastern bank of the Ganga into the Conscious Divine Mother; and a holy shrine for the new age evolved there. At Belur, Sri Ramakrishna's shakti, the Holy Mother Sarada Devi, established a great spiritual centre by her austerities. Swami Vivekananda, the tool in Sri Ramakrishna's hands, founded Sri Ramakrishna's 'Dharmakshetra' (sacred land), a novel shrine of spirituality—Belur Math. It may be aptly said that if Dakshineswar were the 'Gomukha' (the site of the Ganga's origin) of the Ramakrishna movement, Belur Math is its 'Gangotri' (the place where the Ganga makes her majestic advent onto the plains). At the historic moment when the Ramakrishna Mission (Association) was born on 1 May 1897, Swamiji openly placed the Holy Mother in the hallowed position of Sanghajanani (Mother of the Order). The Math got possession of the land on 25 February 1898.

KARMA YOGA ACTIVITIES

It is a great opportunity to provide your services to the Vedanta Society of Toronto. We are inviting volunteers for various activities in the ashram, which includes:

Janitorial (cleaning carpets, floors, washrooms, Shrine area, Meditation room, dusting furnitures, etc.); Garbage / Recycling waste (preferably on Wednesday or Thursday every week); Kitchen and dining hall cleaning; Book-store assistance; Library assistance; Gardening / Snow cleaning / General maintenance activities.

If interested in volunteering, kindly contact us at toronto@rkmm.org or contact Abhijit Bhattacharya on 416-569-9401.

THANK YOU AGAIN.

Buddha's message to the world

Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol 8 (Delivered in San Francisco, on March 18, 1900)

At the time Buddha was born, India was in need of a great spiritual leader, a prophet. There was already a most powerful body of priests. Priests believe that there is a God, but that this God can be approached and known only through them. People can enter the Holy of Holies only with the permission of the priests. You must pay them, worship them, place everything in their hands. The priests dominate you, lay down a thousand rules for you.

The priests in India, the Brahmins, possessed great intellectual and psychic powers. It was they who began the spiritual development of India, and they accomplished wonderful things. But the time came when the free spirit of development that had at first actuated the Brahmins disappeared. They began to arrogate powers and privileges to themselves. If a Brahmin killed a man, he would not be punished. The Brahmin, by his very birth, is the lord of the universe! Even the most wicked Brahmin must be worshipped! But while the priests were flourishing, there existed also the poet-prophets called Sannyâsins. So these poet-prophets of ancient India repudiated the ways of the priest and declared the pure truth.

In India, during Buddha's day, there were the masses of people, and they were debarred from all knowledge. If just a word of the Vedas entered the ears of a man, terrible punishment was visited upon him. The priests had made a secret of the Vedas — the Vedas that contained the spiritual truths discovered by the ancient Hindus! At last one man could bear it no more. He had the brain, the power, and the heart — a heart as infinite as the broad sky. He felt how the masses were being led by the priests and how the priests were glorying in their power, and he wanted to do something about it. He did not want any power over any one, and he wanted to break the mental and spiritual bonds of men. His heart was large. The heart, many around us may have, and we also want to help others. But we do not have the brain; we do not know the ways and means by which help can be given. But this man had the brain to discover the means of breaking the bondages of souls. He learnt why men suffer, and he found the way out of suffering. He was a man of accomplishment, he worked everything out; he taught one and all without distinction and made them realise the peace of enlightenment. This was the man Buddha.

Buddha was the triumph in the struggle that had been going on between the priests and the prophets in India. Buddha cut through all these excrescences. He preached the most tremendous truths. He taught the very gist of the philosophy of the Vedas to one and all without distinction, he taught it to the world at large, because one of his great messages was the equality of man. Men are all equal. Every man and woman has the same right to attain spirituality — that was his teaching. His doctrine was this: Why is there misery in our life? Because we are selfish. We desire things for ourselves — that is why there is misery. What is the way out? The giving up of the self. The self does not exist; the phenomenal world, all this that we perceive, is all that exists. There is nothing called soul underlying the cycle of life and death. There is the stream of thought, one thought following another in succession, each thought coming into existence and becoming non-existent at the same moment, that is all; there is no thinker of the thought, no soul. The body is changing all the time; so is mind, consciousness. The self therefore is a delusion. All selfishness comes of holding on to the self, to this illusory self. If we know the truth that there is no self, then we will be happy and make others happy.

This was what Buddha taught. And he did not merely talk; he was ready to give up his own life for the world. He said, "If sacrificing an animal is good, sacrificing a man is better", and he offered himself as a sacrifice. He said, "This animal sacrifice is another superstition. God and soul are the two big superstitions. Buddha said, "These ceremonials are all wrong. There is but one ideal in the world. Destroy all delusions; what is true will remain. As soon as the clouds are gone, the sun will shine". Man was loving God and had forgotten all about his brother man. The man who in the name of God can give up his very life, can also turn around and kill his brother man in the name of God. That was the state of the world. A man is not only my brother, say the Vedas, he is myself. Hurting any part of the universe, I only hurt myself. I am the universe. It is a delusion that I think I am Mr. So-and-so — that is the delusion. This Self is all that is; It is the only reality. The life of Buddha has an especial appeal. All my life I have been very fond of Buddha, but not of his doctrine. I have more veneration for that character than for any other — that boldness, that fearlessness, and that tremendous love! He was born for the good of men. Others may seek God, others may seek truth for themselves; he did not even care to know truth for himself. He sought truth because people were in misery. How to help them, that was his only concern. Throughout his life he never had a thought for himself. How can we ignorant, selfish, narrow-minded human beings ever understand the greatness of this man?

If he was great in life, he was also great in death. He ate food offered to him by a member of a race similar to your American Indians. Hindus do not touch them, because they eat everything indiscriminately. He told his disciples, "Do not eat this food, but I cannot refuse it. Go to the man and tell him he has done me one of the greatest services of my life — he has released me from the body." An old man came and sat near him, and Buddha taught him. When he found a disciple weeping, he reproved him, saying, "What is this? Is this the result of all my teaching? Let there be no false bondage, no dependence on me, no false glorification of this passing personality. The Buddha is not a person; he is a realisation. Work out your own salvation."

Even when dying, he would not claim any distinction for himself. I worship him for that. What you call Buddhas and Christs are only the names of certain states of realisation. Of all the teachers of the world, he was the one who taught us most to be self-reliant, who freed us not only from the bondages of our false selves but from dependence on the invisible being or beings called God or gods. He invited every one to enter into that state of freedom which he called Nirvana.

Be Yourself

From the book 'With the Swamis in America and India' by Swami Atulananda

The work of Swami Turiyananda at the Shanti Ashrama was character-building. "Be yourself," he used to say, "and be strong. Realization is only for the strong, the pure, and the upright. Remember that you are the Atman. That gives the greatest strength and courage. Be brave; break through the bondage of Maya. Be like the lion; don't tremble at anything. Swamiji has taught you that every soul is potentially divine. Realize your own divinity, then you will realize that all souls are divine. A cloud obscures the sun. We say, 'There is no sun.' But the sun always shines. So the cloud of ignorance makes us believe that we are weak human beings. But the sun of the Atman is always shining. Remove the cloud of ignorance, and the Atman will reveal itself in your heart. When you realize that, then you are a man. Otherwise you are not different from beasts." And when asked how this can be realized, he answered, "Through meditation. Meditation is the key that opens the door to Truth. Meditate, meditate! Meditate till light flashes into your mind and the Atman stands self-revealed. Not by talk, not by study—but by meditation alone the Truth is known." As we had no servants in the Ashrama, we had to do all the work ourselves. We cooked, washed the pots, gathered fuel, washed our clothing, and even built the cabins ourselves. The swami was very happy to see us do this, and often he would himself help in the work. He even carried water from the well in big canisters and cut up the wood for the kitchen fire. We remonstrated that he should not do physical labour, but the swami would not listen to us. "Unless I give the example," he would say, "why should you all work so hard? Let me share in the work. Many hands make the task light."

Once it happened that during meditation, a poisonous beetle bit the swami on his hand. He made a motion with his hand, which threw off the beetle. The swami then thought no more about it. He had not even opened his eyes to see what insect had bitten him. But after an hour or so, his hand began to swell. Then he told us that he had felt the sting of an insect. The swelling increased, and we could not bring it down. The following day the entire arm was swollen, and we became alarmed. What to do? The nearest doctor was fifty miles away. We had no motor—only a horse and a two-wheeled cart. Neither was there a motor road nor a car that could cross the mountains. But something had to be done without further delay. The poison was spreading. Then something unexpected happened. In the evening a gentleman came to our Ashrama on foot. He had walked all the way (fifty miles) and at last had found the Ashrama. When we asked who he was, he told us that he was a doctor. He had come from New York, more than three thousand miles away, and had arrived just at this critical moment. He at once made some incisions, saying that any delay might prove fatal. He had a few simple medicines with him—disinfectants—and soon the swami was out of danger. It was like a miracle. The Mother had sent this young doctor to save the swami's life.

To his disciples, Swami Turiyananda was the greatest blessing that ever entered into their lives. To think of Swami Turiyananda is an act of purification of the mind. To remember his life is an impulse to new endeavor.

Girish Chandra Ghosh – the creative genius

From the book 'Girish Chandra Ghosh – a bohemian devotee of Sri Ramakrishna', by Swami Chetanananda

Girish Chandra had to adopt the Western techniques to Indian poetics, dramatic actions based on rasa and beauty. Girish had to evolve his own techniques and language. He was thoroughly original in these respects. Girish had a wonderful creative genius. The heroes and heroines of his mythological dramas are neither foreign under Hindu cloak nor modernized to suit the taste of the people who are saturated with Western ideas and thoughts. Girish did neither create those characters from his own imagination nor dis-figure them by remoulding, creating situation and action which would be false to the Pauranic ideas. There is not the striking foreign colour, mannerism, and manipulation in his writings. Girish looked upon the Puranas as the mainspring of our nationalism, national inspiration, and life. He made the different phases of mind and passion into living characters showing clearly the hidden workings of human beings for their rise and fall in changing situations and environments in relation to their inner natures and instincts. He did not observe any so-called artificial convention through measured dialogues or social puritanism to show the real character as a whole. He painted the characters as they were with their peculiarities and ways of expression according to their respective stations in life. By Pauranic dramas and by dramatic representations of Buddha, Shankara, Chaitanya, Rupa-Sanatana, and other saints and sages of India he touched the soft chord of the nation; and in an inimitable way he played on them with wonderful skill and sweetness. He inspired men with lofty ideals and sublime thoughts, elevated the people to the height of beauty and joy, and taught them the service and worship of humanity through love and divine outlook. For this his close association with Shri Ramakrishna was not a little responsible. His religious scepticism vanished when he came in contact with Shri Ramakrishna as a result of which he was totally transformed in his ideas and thoughts, in his deeds and habits, and his outlook on man and Nature. He wanted to renounce the world, but the Master commanded him to continue the work for the good of the people. Girish obeyed it till his death. His sense of duty was so great that he would not miss going to the stage even in inclement weather. This strain, however, made him bed-ridden. He died on 8th February 1912 at the age of sixty-eight years..



Vedanta Society of Toronto



Vivekananda Dinner 2026 Sunday, July 19, 2026, 5:30pm.

At Woodbine Banquet Hall, Etobicoke-Toronto

Join us for the Vivekananda Dinner 2026—an auspicious occasion to support the Vedanta Society of Toronto, your beloved ashram

- ❖ **Distinguished Keynote speaker : Swami Samachittananda**
President, Ramakrishna Mission, Singapore

Program Highlights:

- ❖ **Enriching and soulful vocal performance : Vinayak Hegde**
- ❖ **Dance presentations: - Paromita & group (Bhavana performing Arts)**
- Serena and Sangeetha sisters
- ❖ **Drama presentation : Toronto Bengali Drama Group**

Delicious food to complete the evening of celebration and togetherness

Ticket price : \$300.00/ \$200.00/ \$100.00 per adult
(All ticket prices are receiptable at less \$50.00 for value advantage)

For details Contact :

Chitra Ghosh - 647-860-0277
 Abhijit Bhattacharya 416-569-9401
 Manjula Datta - 647-975-9141
 Vikas Sharma - 416-550-6677
 Indrani Sanjal - 647-629-8325
 Purnima Muzumdar 416-262-1311

Jitendra Sheshgiri - 647-300-2661
 Sanjib Mukherjee - 416-993-9919
 Menaka Rajasingham - 416-444-4952
 Asha Burman - 647-679-4675
 Om Lasi & Manisha Tekwani - 416-909-2411 -
 Maya Sheshgiri - 647-824-3663

Participate in the 'Yoga of Devotion'.

Your wholehearted support to this **fundraising event** will empower us to continue our work for the welfare of all.

Motto of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission : *Ātmāno mokṣārthaṃ jagat hitāya ca*, "For one's own salvation and for the welfare of the world".

- Formulated by Swami Vivekananda

Vedanta Society of Toronto

Sponsorship Form for Souvenir

To commemorate Vivekananda Dinner 2026 to be held on July 19, 2026 at 'Woodbine Banquet Hall, Etobicoke, ON

Sponsor's Name/ Company name : _____

Address: _____

Telephone# _____ **FAX#** _____

Email : _____

❖ **Advertisement options:**

- Back Colour Page \$5,000
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- Inside Full-Page Colour \$2,000
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- Inside Half Page B/W \$500
- In side Quarter Page B/W \$300
- Inside One Line Message \$100

- ✓ **Cheques should be made payable to: "Vedanta Society of Toronto"**
- ✓ **Please provide templates or information about your business.**

UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Events	Date & Time
Buddha Jayanti <i>Short speech by Rev Swami Bodhasarananda - Assistant General Secretary – Ramakrishna Math and Mission</i>	May 3 – 11 am <i>In person and also streamed live on YouTube.</i>
Devotional Music <i>Details mentioned below</i>	May 10 – 11 am <i>In person and also streamed live on YouTube.</i>
Vivekananda Dinner 2026 <i>Please see details on page 4</i>	July 19 – 5 pm <i>In person only, at Woodbine Banquet Hall</i>
Guru Purnima	July 29 – 6.30 pm <i>In person and also streamed live on YouTube.</i>
Retreat by Swami Sarvapriyananda <i>Details will be provided on the website</i>	September 19 & 20 – 9am to 4pm <i>Full days Retreat - In person only.</i>

REGULAR PROGRAMMES

SCRIPTURE CLASS: Friday Scripture Classes begin at 7:30 pm, following the regular evening prayer at 6:00 pm. The class, held at the centre, is open to all interested persons. For details, please see the 'Calendar of Events' on the next page.

VIGIL: A vigil consisting of japa and meditation will be observed, from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm, for date kindly see 'Calendar of Events', on next page. To participate, please call the centre @416-240-7262.

RAM NAM: For the date and time of the monthly Ramnam, please see the 'Calendar of Events' on the next page.

BOOK STORE: Limited number of books are available for purchase.

DAILY BREAD FOOD BANK: Daily Bread Food Bank has actively started. We would like to encourage people to donate.

INTERVIEWS/INSTRUCTION:

Swami Kripamayananda will be happy to give Interviews to those interested in knowing more about Vedanta and meditation. Individual interviews are also given for Spiritual instructions. Appointments for interviews should be made in advance with the Swami at 416-240-7262.

DAILY MEDITATION: Meditation is done at the Centre every morning from 6:00 am to 7:00 am. Devotional singing and meditation time in the evenings is from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm.

Devotional Music

at the Vedanta Society of Toronto



Invitation to a Divine Musical Offering



You are warmly invited to a soulful morning of devotional music and serenity.

Please join us for a special musical presentation:

 **Vocal Performance: Sri Vinayak Hegde**

 **Tabla: Sri Kishor Kulkarni**

 **Harmonium: Raya Bidaye**

 **Date: Sunday, 10th May 2026**

 **Time: 11:00 AM**

Vedanta Society of Toronto

Minister and Teacher- Swami Kripamayananda, Ramakrishna Order of India

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 7:30pm Special talk by Rev Swami Bodhasarananda 'Genesis and Growth of Ramakrishna Mission'	2
3 11.00am BUDDHA JAYANTI Short speech by Rev Swami Bodhasarananda - Assistant General Secretary – Ramakrishna Math and Mission	4	5	6	7	8 7:30pm Scripture class 'Uddhava Gita'	9
10 11.00am 'Devotional Music' 5:00pm RAMNAAM	11	12	13	14	15 7:30pm ONLINE only Scripture class 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	16
17 11.00am ONLINE only Lecture: 'The Lord Buddha'	18	19	20	21	22 7:30pm Scripture class 'Uddhava Gita'	23 6am to 6pm VIGIL
24 11.00am Lecture: 'Sarada Devi: Enduring Ideal of Womanhood'	25	26	27	28	29 7:30pm Online only Scripture class 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	30
31 11.00am Lecture: 'Karma and Liberation'						

Soup Kitchen Dates (Starts at 9.30AM)

Main coordinator: Sayan Roy 416-305-4637

Please contact the coordinator for Soup Kitchen dates on email r.sayandip@gmail.com.

AN APPEAL FOR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL for the Year 2026 & DONATION

Vedanta Society appeals to the devotees and well-wishers to kindly come forward and donate generously through online means. Our thanks to those who have responded to our appeal and kindly donated to support the Society. With the current scenario, devotees and well-wishers can donate online through our website PayPal link <https://vedantatoronto.ca/donate> using Credit / Debit cards. Through PayPal you can also setup recurring monthly donations.

All members are requested to send their details by email to toronto@rkmm.org i.e. Name, Address, Mobile - Home phone numbers, email address and amount paid. Please pay the annual subscription through our website PayPal link as mentioned above. This will help us to issue the annual tax receipt.