



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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Newsletter April 2025

Words to Inspire

"Where there is Rama, there is no Kama; where there is Kama, there Rama is not. Night and day can never exist together." The voice of the ancient sages proclaim to us, "If you desire to attain God, you will have to renounce Kâma-Kâncana (lust and possession)."
-----Swami Vivekananda

Sri Ramakrishna getting absorbed in the mood of Mahavir:

Sri Ramakrishna intensely calling on Raghuvir with the attitude of Mahavir: During the first four years of his sadhana, after he had the vision of the Divine Mother, Sri Ramakrishna also called on Raghuvir (Sri Ramachandra), his family deity as intensely as he had called upon the Divine Mother. Adopting the attitude of Mahavir (Hanuman), the greatest devotee of Sri Ramachandra, Sri Ramakrishna used to cry, "Raguvir, Raghuvir". He was filled with the sentiment of Dasya Bhava where God is looked upon as the Master and the devotee assumes the attitude of His servant.

Sri Ramakrishna became so much absorbed in the mood of Mahavir that he altogether forgot for sometime his separate individuality. Sri Ramakrishna said: "At that time I had to walk, take my food and do all other actions like Mahavir. I did not do so on my own accord, but the actions so happened of themselves. I tied my cloth round my waist so that it might look like a tail and walked jumping. I ate nothing but fruits and roots, which again I did not feel inclined to eat when skinned. I spent much of my time on trees and always cried, 'Raghuvir, Raghuvir', with a deep voice. Both my eyes assumed a restless expression like those of the animals of that species, and it is marvellous that the lower end of my backbone lengthened at the time by nearly an inch ... (In course of time it assumed slowly its previous natural size when the mastery of that mood over the mind has ceased)".

Sri Ramakrishna said: "Just imagine Hanuman's state of mind. He didn't care for money, honour, creature comforts, or anything else. He longed only for God. When he was running away with the heavenly weapon that had been secreted in the crystal pillar, Mandodari began to tempt him with various fruits so that he might come down and drop the weapon.³ But he couldn't be tricked so easily. In reply to her persuasions he sang this song:

Am I in need of fruit?

I have the Fruit that makes this life Fruitful indeed.

Within my heart, the Tree of Rama grows,

Bearing salvation for its fruit.

*Under the Wish-fulfilling Tree of Rama do I sit at ease,
Plucking whatever fruit I will.*

As Sri Ramakrishna was singing the song he went into samadhi.

Sri Ramakrishna having the vision of Devi Sita: When Sri Ramakrishna was intensely calling on Sri Ramachandra with the attitude of Mahavir Hanuman, he had the vision of Devi Sita, the Shakti of Sri Ramachandra, Who came and merged inside his body. Sri Ramakrishna described this incident as follows: "One day at that time I was sitting under the Panchavati - not meditating, merely sitting - when an incomparable, effulgent female figure appeared before me illumining the whole place. It was not that figure alone that I saw then, but also the trees and plants of the Panchavati, the Ganga and all other objects. I saw that the figure was that of a woman; for, there were in her no signs of a goddess, such as the presence of three eyes, etc. But the extraordinary, spirited and solemn expression of that face, manifesting love, sorrow, compassion and endurance, was not generally seen even in the figures of goddesses. Looking graciously at me, that goddess-woman was advancing from north to south towards me with a slow, grave gait. I wondered who she might be, when a black-faced monkey came suddenly, nobody knew whence, and sat at her feet and someone within my mind exclaimed, 'Sita, Sita who was all sorrow all her life, Sita the daughter of king Janaka, Sita to whom Rama was her very life'. Saying 'Mother' repeatedly, I was then going to fling myself at her feet, when she came quickly and entered this (showing his own body). Overwhelmed with joy and wonder, I lost all consciousness and fell down. Before that, I had had no vision in that manner without meditating or thinking. That was the first vision of its kind. I have been suffering like her all my life perhaps because I saw first of all Sita, who was miserable from her birth."

From the book, 'Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master', by Swami Saradananda.

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.

Concord through Bhakti

(Excerpted from the article by Swami Swami Satyamayananda from the archives of Prabuddha Bharata)

The world is, metaphorically speaking, shrinking each passing day due to improving communications of various kinds. Apart from the accessibility to know the world's marvels, connectivity is making humanity close-knit. This phenomenon is occurring through the storage, retrieval, and transmission of information. Whatever happens at one end of the globe finds its reverberations and repercussions all over. Communications have made humanity more aware by extending consciousness and gradually making humans truly global. 'Yatra vishvam bhavati-eka-nidam; in which the universe finds a single place of rest.' While frontiers and horizons of knowledge are opening up, this world remains, as Swami Vivekananda says, 'wheel within wheel, this intricate mass of machinery, most complex, most wonderful.' Diversity and variety are finally recognized as the world's essential nature, or rather, we are forced to do so. There was a time when it was thought that science had all the answers. It is found now that each discipline has, after a few steps, branched out into allied or sometimes completely disparate fields. The more people work in a particular area, the more it extends into newer areas. Others coming later pursue it further to find it again branching off. This has created a knowledge explosion. It is like entering into the bowels of this 'intricate mass of machinery', finding labyrinths inside labyrinths lying undiscovered. Secret after secret is unveiled, yet the pursuit for comprehensive answers continues while the solutions remain remote. Knowledge is uncovering worlds within inexhaustible worlds. True scientists are not complacent but humbled by this nature of knowledge. Swamiji says, 'unity in variety is the plan of creation.' The unravelling of secrets is making humanity more cerebral, and the benefits flow down to everyone in this shrinking world, for it is the nature of the mind to spread and synthesize knowledge. In the old days Swamiji said that, 'whenever either by mighty conquest or by commercial supremacy different parts of the world have been kneaded into one whole race and bequests have been made from one corner to the other, each nation, as it were, poured forth its own quota, either political, social, or spiritual.' The world is today well connected and ideas and services are surging through communication channels. The need to link things, as in the past, through force and fraud is redundant. Each isolated culture will grow left to itself, but

this growth can be quickened through interaction and cooperation. People working in a particular field are often surprised when solutions come from others working in a completely different field. The idea that knowledge is something rarefied and meant for a select few is completely wrong. Each person that works contributes to knowledge. It is an ancient truth spoken in the Bhagavadgita: 'Sarvam karmakhilam partha jnane parisamapyate; all karma in their totality, O Partha, culminates in knowledge.' Every working person is pushing forward the frontiers of knowledge. Of course, work ought to be done with concentration. Swamiji says: 'The more this power of concentration, the more knowledge is acquired, because this is the one and only method of acquiring knowledge.' Hence, Swamiji has all through laid much emphasis on work as a sure means for prosperity and freedom. The world is saner, less violent, and more cooperative today than ever before. This contention can be challenged with what one finds everyday in personal brutality and cruelty, in selfishness, greed, and corruption. However, these things were present even before but not known widely, because the world was partitioned by numerous limitations as well as distance. Today faster modes of travel and availability of internet have spread and magnified every small thing. Knowledge not only transforms lifestyles and thought-styles and brings innovation, it also is responsible for eradicating corruption, violence, and other social evils through transparency in our dealings. The Gita declares: 'Na hi jnanena sadrisham pavitram-ihya vidyate; indeed, there is nothing purifying here comparable to knowledge.' The Gita further elaborates that knowledge liberates.

There is nothing that brings more joy and fulfilment than knowledge. 'The gift of knowledge is a far higher gift than that of food and clothes; it is even higher than giving life to a man, because the real life of man consists of knowledge. Ignorance is death, knowledge is life. Life is of very little value, if it is a life in the dark, groping through ignorance and misery.' Knowledge also implies renunciation; and the greater the sacrifices, the higher the knowledge. Such a power is the best that a person can strive for, and that is the reason why it was held sacrosanct and given prestige. The culture not based on knowledge is just a thin veneer of artificiality. Sri Ramakrishna's advent opened up the world from its parochialism and narrowness to universality.

Mahavira, our ideal

Swami Vivekananda

You have now to make the character of Mahavira your ideal. See how at the command of Ramachandra he crossed the ocean. He had no care for life or death! He was a perfect master of his senses and wonderfully sagacious. You have now to build your life on this great ideal of personal service. Through that, all other ideals will gradually manifest in life. Obedience to the Guru without questioning, and strict observance of Brahmacharya — this is the secret of success. As on the one hand Hanuman represent the ideal of service, so on the other hand he represents leonine courage, striking the whole world with awe. He has not the least hesitation in sacrificing his life for the good of Rama. A supreme indifference to everything except the service of Rama, even to the attainment of the status of Brahma and Shiva, the great World – gods! Only the carrying out of Shri Rama's best is the one vow of this life! Such whole – hearted devotion is wanted.'

The Transformation of Valmiki from a robber to a sage

There was a young man that could not in any way support his family. He was strong and vigorous and finally, became a highway robber; he attacked persons in the street and robbed them, and with that money he supported his father, mother, wife and children.

This went on continually, until one day a great saint called Narada was passing by, and the robber attacked him. The sage asked the robber, "Why are you going to rob me? It is a great sin to rob human beings and kill them. What do you incur all this sin for?"

The robber said, "Why, I want to support my family with this money." "Now", said the sage, "do you think that they take a share of your sin also?" "Certainly they do," replied the robber. "Very good," said the sage, "make me safe by tying me up here, while you go home and ask your people whether they will share your sin in the same way as they share the money you make."

The man accordingly went to his father, and asked, "Father, do you know how I support you?" He answered, "No, I do not." "I am a robber, and I kill persons and rob them." "What! you do that, my son? Get away! You outcast!"

He then went to his mother and asked her, "Mother, do you know how I support you?" "No," she replied. "Through robbery and murder." "How horrible it is!" cried the mother. "But, do you partake in my sin?" said the son. "Why should I? I never committed a robbery," answered the mother.

Then, he went to his wife and questioned her, "Do you know how I maintain you all?" "No," she responded. "Why, I am a highwayman," he rejoined, "and for years have been robbing people; that is how I support and maintain you all. And what I now want to know is, whether you are ready to share in my sin."

"By no means. You are my husband, and it is your duty to support me."

The eyes of the robber were opened. "That is the way of the world — even my nearest relatives, for whom I have been robbing, will not share in my destiny." He came back to the place where he had bound the sage, unfastened his bonds, fell at his feet, recounted everything and said, "Save me! What can I do?"

The sage said, "Give up your present course of life. You see that none of your family really loves you, so give up

all these delusions. They will share your prosperity; but the moment you have nothing, they will desert you. There is none who will share in your evil, but they will all share in your good. Therefore worship Him who alone stands by us whether we are doing good or evil. He never leaves us, for love never drags down, knows no barter, no selfishness."

Then the sage taught him how to worship. And this man left everything and went into a forest. There he went on praying and meditating until he forgot himself so entirely that the ants came and built ant-hills around him and he was quite unconscious of it.

After many years had passed, a voice came saying, "Arise, O sage!" Thus aroused he exclaimed, "Sage? I am a robber!" "No more 'robber'," answered the voice, "a purified sage art thou. Thine old name is gone. But now, since thy meditation was so deep and great that thou didst not remark even the ant-hills which surrounded thee, henceforth, thy name shall be Valmiki — 'he that was born in the ant-hill'." So, he became a sage. And this is how he became a poet. One day as this sage, Valmiki, was going to bathe in the holy river Ganga, he saw a pair of doves wheeling round and round, and kissing each other.

The sage looked up and was pleased at the sight, but in a second an arrow whisked past him and killed the male dove. As the dove fell down on the ground, the female dove went on whirling round and round the dead body of its companion in grief.

In a moment the poet became miserable, and looking round, he saw the hunter. "Thou art a wretch," he cried, "without the smallest mercy! Thy slaying hand would not even stop for love!" "What is this? What am I saying?" the poet thought to himself, "I have never spoken in this sort of way before." And then a voice came: "Be not afraid. This is poetry that is coming out of your mouth. Write the life of Rama in poetic language for the benefit of the world."

And that is how the poem first began. The first verse sprang out of pits from the mouth of Valmiki, the first poet. And it was after that, that he wrote the beautiful Ramayana, "The Life of Rama".

Sita – the purest

By Swami Vivekananda.

Sitā was chastity itself; she would never touch the body of another man except that of her husband. "Pure? She is chastity itself", says Rāma.

Sitā—the pure, the pure, the all-suffering! Sitā is the name in India for everything that is good, pure, and holy; everything that in woman we call woman.

Sitā—the patient, all-suffering, ever-faithful, ever-pure wife! Through all the suffering she had, there was not one harsh word against Rāma.

Sitā never returned injury.

"Be Sitā!"

Simple Faith

From the book, 'Inspired Talks'.

One day Vivekananda related to us the story that had most impressed itself upon his life. It was told him over and over again in his babyhood by his nurse and he never wearied of hearing it repeated. I will give it as nearly as possible in his own words—

The widow of a Brahmin was left very, very poor with one child, a little boy who was almost a baby. Because he was the son of a brahmin, the boy had to be educated, but how to do it? In the village, where the poor widow lived, there was no teacher, so the boy had to go to the neighbouring village to be taught and because his mother was very poor he had to walk there. There was a small forest between the two villages and through this the boy had to pass. In India, as in all hot countries, teaching is given very early in the morning and again towards evening. Through the heat of the day no work is done, so it was always dark when the little boy went to school and also when he came home. In my country, instruction in religion is free to those who cannot pay, so the little boy could go to this teacher without charge, but he had to walk through the forest and he was alone and he was terribly afraid. He went to his mother and said: 'I have always to go alone through that terrible forest and I am afraid. Other boys have servants to go with them and take care of them, why cannot I have a servant to go with me?' But his mother said: 'Alas, my child! I am too poor, I cannot send a servant with you.' 'What can I do then?' asked the little boy. 'I will tell you,' said his mother, 'Do this. In the forest is your shepherded-brother Krishna; call on him and he will come and take care of you and you will not be alone.' So the next day the little boy went into the forest and called, 'Brother-shepherd, brother-shepherd, are you there?' and he heard a voice say, 'Yes, I am here,' and the little boy was comforted and was no more afraid. By and by he used to meet, coming out of the forest, a boy of his own age, who played with him and walked with him and the little boy was happy. After a while, the father of the teacher died and there was a great ceremonial festival, (as is common in India on such occasions), when all the scholars made presents to their teacher and the poor little boy went to his mother and asked her to buy him a present to give like the rest. But his mother told him, she was too poor. Then he wept and said: 'What shall I do?' And his mother said, 'Go to brother-shepherd and ask him.' So he went into the forest and called, 'Brother-shepherd, brother-shepherd can you give me a present to give to my teacher?' And there appeared before him a little pitcher of milk. The boy took the pitcher gratefully and went to the house of his teacher and stood in a corner waiting for the servants to take his gift to the teacher. But the other presents were so much grander and finer that the servants paid no attention to him, so he spoke and said, 'Teacher, here is the present I have brought you.' Still no one took any notice. Then the little boy spoke up again from his corner and said, 'Teacher, here is the present I have brought you,' and the teacher looking over and seeing the pitiful little gift, scorned it, but said to the servant, 'Since he makes so much fuss about it, take the pitcher and pour the milk into one of the glasses and let him go. So the servant took the pitcher and poured the milk into a cup, but just as soon as he poured out the milk, the pitcher filled right up again and it could not be emptied. Then everybody was surprised and asked, 'What is this, where did you get this pitcher?' and the little boy said, 'Brother-shepherd gave it to me in the forest.' 'What!' they all exclaimed, 'you have seen Krishna and he gave you this?' 'Yes,' said the little boy, 'and he plays with me every day and walks with me when I come to school.' 'What!' they all exclaimed 'You walk with Krishna! You play with Krishna!' And the teacher said, 'Can you take us and show us this?' And the little boy said, 'Yes I can, come with me.' Then the little boy and the teacher went into the forest and the little boy began to call as usual, 'Brother-shepherd, brother-shepherd, here is my teacher come to you, where are you?' but no answer came. The little boy called again and again and no answer came. Then he wept and said, 'Brother-shepherd, do come, or else they will call me a liar.'

Then from afar off a voice was heard saying:

'I come to you because you are pure and your time has come, but your teacher has many rounds to go through before he can see Me.'

Sita and Sarada

by Swami Gambhirananda

Devotion to one form of Mother, if cultivated from a young age does not preclude love for other forms of Mother. Rather it definitely helps in transposing one's devotion easily on another form of Mother, if needed! The variety of names and forms of Mother in Hinduism may bewilder anyone who is not acquainted with the philosophy of Vedanta. But a devotee in this tradition accepts the Divine Mother as '*ananta roopini, ananta gunavati, ananta naamni girije maa*' – O Girije Ma! thou art infinite forms, infinite qualities and infinite names, says a poet-devotee.

Hence the transition from Sita to Sarada was smooth enough in my life. Ma Sarada's experience in the Rameshwaram temple vouchsafes that she is no different from Ma Sita.

When Holy Mother visited Rameshwaram temple, Tamil Nadu in 1910, she was directly taken to the sanctum sanctorum and was allowed to worship Lord Shiva in the form of uncovered Shivalingam. The Mother offered 108 golden leaves shaped like the real leaves of the bel (vilva) tree. She stayed in that small town for three days and every morning and evening she would visit the temple and perform worship with flowers, chandan (sandal) and vilva leaves. The Holy Mother observed all customary traditions of the temple.

It is said that Brahmachari Krishnalal who was an attendant to Holy Mother heard Mother uttering in a mood unaware of the external world: 'It is just as I had left.' After a few weeks in Kolkata when once Kedar babu enquired of Mother about her visit to Rameshwaram, she uttered once again, 'He is just as I had left Him, my son!'

UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Events	Date & Time
Rama Navami	Apr 6 @ 11am <i>Also Puja will be streamed live on YouTube.</i>
Buddha Jayanti	May 11 @ 11am <i>Also Puja will be streamed live on YouTube.</i>
Guru Purnima	(Tentatively) July 10 @ 6:30pm <i>Also Puja will be streamed live on YouTube.</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.

SOUP KITCHEN: Please see next page for details.

Radiance of Love

*Composed by Nivedika Nishanthi, Grade 6
(A student of the Vedanta Vidya Mandir)*

Sri Ramakrishna, kind and bright,
A guiding star, a beacon of light.
With love in his heart, and peace in his soul,
He taught us the way to make us whole.
He showed us how to see the divine,
In every moment, in every sign.
With simple words, he shared his grace,
And helped us find our sacred place.
Through devotion, through prayer, through joy,
He taught us the truth no one could destroy.
In every heart, his message lives,
That love is the gift life always gives.
Sri Ramakrishna, pure and true,
His love shines in me, and shines in you.
A path of peace, so gentle, so clear,
In his presence, there's nothing to fear.

Vedanta Society of Toronto

Minister and Teacher- Swami Kripamayananda, Ramakrishna Order of India

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u> 7:30pm Scripture class 'Uddhava Gita'	<u>5</u>
<u>6</u> 11.00am Rama Navami celebration	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u> 7:30pm Scripture class 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>12</u> 6am to 6pm VIGIL
<u>13</u> 11.00am Lecture: <i>Rama's way of Devotion</i> ----- 5:00 pm RamNam	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u> 7:30pm Scripture class (<u>Online Only</u>) 'Uddhava Gita'	<u>19</u>
<u>20</u> 11.00am Lecture (<u>Online Only</u>): 'Speaking with God'	<u>21</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u> 7:30pm Scripture class 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>26</u>
<u>27</u> 11.00am Lecture: 'Spirituality, my birth-right'	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>31</u>		

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.

IMPORTANT NOTICE regarding Cheques

We thank ALL for your kind support.

It has been observed that cheques received from our devotees are not written correctly. This results in the cheques being rejected by our bank. Please note that while writing cheques, print full name '**Vedanta Society of Toronto**'. Banks are rejecting cheques with even slightest variance in the '*Payees name*'. Also purpose of donation can be mentioned in the Memo section as to whether the cheque is for Donation, Seminar / Retreat, Soup Kitchen, Thakur Seva Fund, Vidyamandir Fees or Books purchase, etc.

Similarly, if paying online on the Vedanta Society of Toronto website and if it is for **ANY OTHER PURPOSE OTHER THAN GENERAL DONATION**, then please send an immediate email to talwar.anupam@yahoo.ca copy to toronto@rkmm.org, spelling out OTHER SPECIFIC PURPOSE of the payment.

Sincerely Thank You for supporting Vedanta Society of Toronto.

AN APPEAL FOR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL for the Year 2025 & 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 who have not renewed their membership for the year 2025, 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.