



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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Newsletter April 2026

Words to Inspire

'Open your grief-stricken heart to the Lord. Weep and sincerely pray, 'O Lord, draw me towards You; give me peace of mind.' By doing so constantly you, will gradually attain peace of mind.'Sri Sarada Devi

Sacred OM

The sacred word Om is the indicator of both Saguna Brahman (Brahman with attributes) and Nirguna Brahman (Brahman devoid of all attributes). The scriptures of Vedanta make a distinction between meditation (dhyana) with the support of a symbol and right apprehension (nididhyasana). Right apprehension is direct and immediate knowledge of Brahman, while meditation is unbroken concentration on Brahman. Right apprehension of an object is determined by fact, whereas apprehension of an object in meditation is indirect and depends on the seeker's mind, faith, and will. Meditation is recommended for those seekers who are not able to practice right apprehension. Such seekers are guided more by faith than by reason. Vidyaranya in his Panchadasi says: It is possible to overcome the mental creation by means of meditation on attributeless Brahman, which again is gradually and easily acquired by meditation on Brahman with associates.....

The same idea is fully explained in the Atma Gita, which enjoins meditation on the attributeless Brahman on those who are unable to discriminate between Self and non-Self. Depending on his fitness, the seeker may practice meditation on Saguna Brahman or on Nirguna Brahman. In both cases, some symbol of the Ultimate is used to hold the mind: the

symbol that is recommended for use in the practice of meditation on the attributeless Brahman is Om. Though Vedantic texts mention several other symbols for meditation on the attributeless Brahman, such as the mind, the sky, the sun, and like tat ("That") and sat (Reality), nonetheless, Om is considered the greatest verbal symbol of both Nirguna and Saguna Brahman. Shankaracharya, in his commentary on verse 5.1.1 of Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, observes: Although the words Brahman, Atman, etc., are names of Brahman, yet on the authority of the Srutis [i.e., the Vedas] we know that Om is its most intimate appellation. Therefore, it is the best means for the realisation of Brahman. It is so in two ways - as a symbol and as a name. As a symbol: Just as the image of Vishnu or any other god is regarded as identical with that god (for the purpose of worship), so is Om to be treated as Brahman. All prayer, contemplation, and meditation merge in Om, and Om finally merges in the silence of samadhi. As Sri Ramakrishna says: "The Sandhya [ceremonial prayer] merges in the Gayatri [the concentrated prayer of the Vedas], the Gayatri in Om, and Om in samadhi."

From the book 'Meditation & Its Practices'
by Sw Adiswarananda.

Tax Receipts for Year 2025

Please be informed that all Tax receipts for donations received in the Year 2025 have been mailed or emailed. Vedanta Society of Toronto thank you for your kind donations which helps us in the smooth functioning of the ashram and we look forward to your generous support in the future.

THANK YOU

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

Scriptures and Spiritual Life

Excerpt from a lecture by Swami Dayatmananda, from Vedanta Magazine, UK

One day Sri Ramakrishna was listening to the reading of the Bhagavata in front of the Vishnu temple. He went into ecstasy and had the vision of Sri Krishna's luminous form. He saw that a beam of light like a cord came out of Sri Krishna's lotus feet and touched the book, whence it touched the Master's heart and remained simultaneously touching all the three of them for some time. There arose from that vision the firm conviction in his mind that, although the three, viz., the scripture, the devotee and the divine Lord, appear as different entities, they are one and the same thing; in other words, they are manifestations of the same Reality.

Thenceforward Sri Ramakrishna used to chant everyday: "Bhagavata, Bhakta; Bhagavan, meaning "The three - the Bhagavata (the scripture), the Bhakta (the devotee) and the Bhagavan (the divine Lord) - are One and the One is the three." (Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master).

Scriptures and Religions

The foundation and life-breath of every religion is scriptures or holy books. They play a most significant role in society in general and among spiritual aspirants in particular. They mould the lives of spiritual seekers, inspiring, guiding and exhorting them until they reach the goal of life, i.e. God-realization. The moment these scriptures are taken away religions simply cease to exist, and without religion society slumps into chaos. This is the reason why some religions even worship a scripture as the highest form of God.

What is a scripture?

The scriptures are not human constructs. They are the records of the experiences of sages and saints who had direct realization of the Ultimate Reality. Only the scriptures can reveal the truth about God, after-life, and other worlds; for these truths are unavailable to the ordinary sense organs. Hence, we have no option but to put our faith in the scriptures. It is a psychological fact that we can only desire what we know. So how can we desire spiritual life without knowing about it? And without desiring the highest, life becomes joyless and barren. That is why we are advised to study scriptures daily.

Scriptures and faith

The scriptures contain nothing but truth. They only speak of God and the after-life. Hence regular and devout study of the scriptures fosters faith, and faith inspires us to lead a pure and holy life. Negligence of the study of scriptures slowly but surely erodes our faith in God, moral life and ultimate justice. Without deep faith one cannot pursue spiritual life. Anyone can verify the truth of this statement.

Saints and Scriptures

When asked by Swami Shivananda, the then President of the Ramakrishna Order, what he was doing, a monk informed him that he was reading the Upanishads. In reply the Swami said: "What will you gain by reading the Upanishads? Study our lives." The Swami, of course, is not denigrating the study of the scriptures. He is merely indicating that the life of a saint is a living and moving scripture. Scriptures contain essentials and non-essentials. It is easy to confuse one with the other. Also, the scriptures contain seemingly contradictory statements. This is because they have to speak to different types of aspirants. Inability to understand this may lead to confusion and harm. Misinterpretation of the scriptures can also lead to fanaticism and evil. But if one can learn scriptures from a spiritual person one can get the essence. That is why one is advised to seek and study scriptures under a competent spiritual teacher.

Scriptures as the best form of holy company

Sri Ramakrishna used to say that a spiritual aspirant must cultivate holy company. One of the best ways to cultivate holy company is a daily study of the scriptures with devotion. Especially these days when genuine spiritual persons are rare to come by, the best way is to keep holy books nearby. And holy books are available in millions.

The Taittiriya Upanishad repeatedly warns its students not to neglect regular study of the scriptures. The Upanishad equates the study of scriptures with austerity and exhorts the students not to neglect scriptural studies no less than thirteen times!!

What do the scriptures teach?

Every scripture must teach these following five truths: the nature of God, the nature of the individual soul, the goal of life, the way to the attainment of this goal, the various obstructions that bar us from reaching it and ways of overcoming them.

The way to study scriptures

It is unwise to read scriptures in any way one likes. They must be read for Truth and guidance, and not for intellectual stimulation. In fact, the intellect can never grasp the Truth of Reality. When a spiritual aspirant practises spiritual disciplines sincerely and with devotion a special capacity called Medha, which enables him to understand spiritual truths, arises in him. So one of the Vedic Peace Chants says: "May what we both study reveal the Truth!"

The Imitation of Christ also advises us: "Look for truth in the Bible; not eloquence. Every verse should be read in the spirit with which it was written. If you want to make your Scripture reading worthwhile, read with humility, simplicity, and faith."

Knowing Hanuman – The finest embodiment of Devotion

1) He is the personification of dedication and devotion

Among the most popular divinities in the Hindu pantheon, Hanuman and his story have been adapted by numerous cultures throughout the ages. The oldest rendering, however, is found in the Sanskrit Ramayana of Sage Valmiki, who is believed to have lived in India thousands of years ago. One of Hinduism's great epics, The Ramayana tells the tale of the exiled Prince Rama (an avatar of Vishnu) who journeys across the ocean to rescue his wife Sita from the power-hungry king Ravana. In the quest to rescue his wife, Rama, along with his brother Lakshman, ally with an intelligent monkey warrior race known as Vanaras, amongst whom is Hanuman. As Hanuman exhibits extraordinary abilities in Rama's service throughout the adventure, including speed, strength, courage, and wisdom, the friendship between the two develops and deepens, proving ultimately that Hanuman's greatest ability is, in fact, his incredibly staunch loyalty and devotion. In depiction of this devotion, he is often portrayed kneeling with folded hands in front of Rama, Sita, and Lakshman, or pulling apart his chest to reveal an image of Rama and Sita where his heart should be. A perfect combination of bal (strength), buddhi (intelligence), and vidya (wisdom), he is the exemplary bhakti yogi, or one who fearlessly uses his gifts to connect to the Divine through sincere loving service.

2) He is the son of the wind god

Though multiple versions, with varying details, exist of Hanuman's birth, a common telling centers around a Vanara named Anjana who worshiped Shiva for a son. Pleased by Anjana's prayer and penance, Shiva sent his divine power and blessing through Vayu (the wind god) into Anjana's womb. Besides making him famous as the son of Vayu, the nature of Hanuman's conception has led many to believe he is also an avatar of Shiva. While this idea is not accepted by all Hindu schools of thought, like Shiva, Hanuman is widely considered a perfected yogi, possessing eight siddhis ("mystic perfections"), which include anima (the ability to become smaller than the smallest), mahima (the ability to become infinitely large), laghima (the ability to become lighter than air), prapti (the ability to instantly travel anywhere at will), prakamya (the ability to achieve whatever one desires), isitva (the ability to create or annihilate anything at will), vasitva (the ability to control the elements of material nature), and kamavasayita (the ability to assume any form or shape one desires). Though Hanuman has all of these abilities, they are all byproducts of the ultimate goal of yoga, which is to connect to the Divine. Being a perfect yogi, he therefore employs them not for the satisfaction of his own senses, but in the service of the divine Rama.

3) His name means "disfigured jaw"

Once, as a young child, thinking the sun to be a fruit, Hanuman sprang upwards with outstretched hands in hopes of grabbing it. Blessed with the potency of his divine father Vayu, he soared through the air, getting closer and closer to his goal. Threatened by his power, Indra, the king of heaven, struck Hanuman down with a thunderbolt, sending him hurling back to the ground where he laid unconscious. Enraged by the sight of his seemingly lifeless son, Vayu withdrew the movement of air necessary for life's sustenance throughout the universe. Desperate to prevent cosmic disaster, the gods approached Brahma, the engineer of the universe, for help. Understanding Hanuman to be an exalted devotee of Vishnu who would eventually aid Rama in defeating Ravana, Brahma revived the child, after which all of the most prominent gods blessed him with special abilities, thus pacifying Vayu. Named for the broken jaw he incurred from the impact of his fall (hanu means "jaw" and man means "prominent"), Hanuman's name is a reminder of the precarious nature of unbridled power, and how it can often result in dangerous consequences when unguided.

4) He was cursed to forget his powers

Mischievous in his youth, Hanuman would often bother the temple priests and sages by disrupting their sacrificial ceremonies in various ways. Angered by Hanuman's antics, they eventually cursed him to forget his powers until he was reminded of them by another. It wasn't until years later, when Hanuman was helping Rama search for Sita, that the knowledge of his powers were restored to him. Having discovered that Sita was being held captive across the ocean in Sri Lanka, the Vanaras wondered who among them could leap over the sea to reach Ravana's kingdom. Aware of his divine origin and childhood, Jambavan, an intelligent bear king who was helping the Vanaras, began describing Hanuman's true power to all who were present. As Jambavan finished his speech — effectively ending the sages' curse — Hanuman, remembering his prowess, stood up, and with a great roar, made his declaration to perform the task. Expanding his body to 50 times its normal height, he squatted down, and then sprang forth with immense energy. Today, Hanuman's energy is commonly invoked by practitioners of Kushti (a traditional form of Hindu wrestling practiced in the Indian subcontinent), while his leap across the ocean is paid homage to in yoga as a pose called Hanumanasana (the splits).

Ram Naam

"RAMNAAM" is a liturgical composition expounding the glory of Sri Rama through a series of names that suggestively highlight the main incidents in the life story of this Divine Incarnation.

Swami Brahmananda, the first President of the Ramakrishna Order, once heard this composition being sung during one of his pilgrimages to South India. He was so thrilled by the charm of the melody, the exquisiteness of the sentiments, and the fervor of the devotion from this Hymn, that he made its chanting a regular feature, especially of the Ekadashi Prayers in the branch centres of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. Today, this Ramanam Sankirtanam has become a paean of pure joy for hundreds of thousands of devoted men, women and children all over India and abroad.

Vedanta Society of Toronto

Vivekananda Dinner

Join us for the Vivekananda Dinner-
an auspicious occasion to support the
Vedanta Society of Toronto,
your beloved Ashram.

Save the Date:

Sunday, July 19, 2026

5:30pm

At Woodbine Banquet Hall,
Etobicoke-Toronto.



Participate in the 'Yoga of
Devotion' by contributing to
this *fundraising event*.

Be a part of this noble
cause and help support our
mission of service to
humanity.

Your wholehearted support will enable us to
continue our work for the welfare of all.

Stay tuned for the details!

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

UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Events	Date & Time
Shri Ramanavami	March 27 – 6.30 pm <i>In person and also streamed live on YouTube.</i>
Sunday lecture: <i>'Hanuman- the great bhakta of Shri Ram'</i>	March 29 – 11 am <i>In person and also streamed live on YouTube.</i>
Gitarjanam Part-2 <i>Dance play based on Bhagwad Gita Ch-4 to 7</i>	April 5 – 10.30 am <i>In person and also streamed live on YouTube.</i>
Buddha Jayanti	May 24 – 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>

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.


Vedanta Society of Toronto
 A Branch Of The Ramakrishna Order

GITARJANAM
 Part II Chapters 4 to 7
APRIL 5, 2026
10:30am
 Free Admission

BHAGAVADGITA
*in an engaging performance
 through dance, music, and drama.*
*Concept, Choreography and Direction
 by Dr. Alakananda*

120 Emmett Avenue, York, ON, M6M 2E6

Vedanta Society of Toronto

Minister and Teacher- Swami Kripamayananda, Ramakrishna Order of India

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u> 7:30pm Scripture class 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>4</u>
<u>5</u> 10.30am Gitarjanam Part-2 Dance play based on Bhagwad Gita Ch-4 to 7	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u> 7:30pm Scripture class 'Uddhava Gita'	<u>11</u> 6am to 6pm VIGIL
<u>12</u> 11.00am Lecture: 'The Transformation' 5:00pm RAMNAAM	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u> 7:30pm Scripture class 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>18</u>
<u>19</u> 11.00am Lecture: 'Shankara-A Prophet'	<u>20</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u> 7:30pm ONLINE Scripture class 'Uddhava Gita'	<u>25</u>
<u>26</u> 11.00am ONLINE Lecture: 'The Destiny of Man'	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>30</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.

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.