



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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Newsletter February 2026

Words to Inspire

"God is realized only through His grace. Nonetheless, one must perform Japa and meditation, for they remove the impurities of one's mind. One must practise spiritual disciplines such as worship, Japa, and meditation. As one gets the fragrance of a flower by handling it or the scent of the sandalwood by rubbing it against a stone, similarly one becomes spiritually awakened by continuously contemplating on the Divine. But you can become illumined right now, if you become desireless."

Sri Sarada Devi

A Divine Mission

From the book, '*The Early History of the Ramakrishna Movement.*'

Towards the close of his twelve-year-long period of spiritual practices, Sri Ramakrishna had some prophetic revelations, one of them being that a community given to 'the liberal faith revealed in his own life' was to be founded. The translation of this divine vision into practical form was one of the historic achievements of the world teacher who was Sri Ramakrishna. He proceeded to actualize his divine mission in two phases. On his discovering a spiritual giant in Sri Ramakrishna in March 1875, the Brahmo leader, Keshab Chandra Sen, spoke of the saint in his sermons and in his writings for the journals. The Brahmos, people belonging to different indigenous and non-indigenous faiths, householders and youths from different strata of society, began crowding the master's room in Dakshineswar, particularly on weekends and holidays. Also, the Brahmos and the Hindus invited him to their festivals and other occasions. His every visit, each time exuding joy different from the ordinary pleasure of the world, brought together devotees and kindred souls. Their prime attraction had been the Parmahansa, his charming talks, devotional songs, dancing in the joy of the spirit, and his slipping, at times, into the state of samadhi. Interaction among themselves as well as with the source of inspiration, Sri Ramakrishna, made the groups cohesive. Celebration of his birth anniversary brought them closer still. As time passed, the circle of devotees grew wider. His influence on those who lived within his orbit became manifest in both their mundane and spiritual lives. In this way, the movement had a humble beginning, almost unnoticed; but its impact was undeniable.

In the second phase, he carefully selected young men who were to form the core of the community he was building.

Testing the eligibility of each both by natural means and by his supernatural insight, he completed their selection before he left for Cossipore on 11 December 1885. Some of them had already joined Narendranath to serve their ailing Master at Shyampukur. Now most of them came to Cossipore to stay with the Master and serve him. Thus, more than a dozen world-renouncing, bright youths, whom he called 'unpecked fruit,' rallied around him; and before he passed away, he committed all of them to the charge of Narendranath, the most gifted among them, who later became world-renowned as Swami Vivekananda. Sri Ramakrishna appointed Narendranath to effectuate the divine mission that was revealed to him by the Divine Mother on successful completion of his twelve-year course of spiritual practices, which included experimental verification of God in different religions. However, Swamiji had some reservations at first about the need for an organization and about its nature and scope. His ideas in this regard crystallized only after his visit to the United States. The power, organization, material prosperity, as well as the spirit of democracy, freedom and justice in Western society deeply impressed him. During that period he had, as he said, 'the greatest temptation in his life in America,' by which he meant no other than 'organization. He wrote to his brother-disciples in 1894, 'What is wanted is a power of organization—do you understand me?'. And again in another letter to his foremost lay disciple Alasinga, 'Throw self overboard and work. Remember "The grass when made into a rope by being joined together can even chain a mad elephant." Later, Swamiji was to declare: 'To make a great future India, the whole secret lies in organization, accumulation of power, coordination of wills. Organization alone is the primary means for all progress and the only way for the conservation of energy.'

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

Holy Mother's Baghbazar house

From, 'Holy Mother Sri Sri Sarada Devi'

When the Mother came to Calcutta, she had often to live in the houses of devotees. She was, of course, noted for her endurance and adaptability; but it pained Swami Saradananda to find her personal freedom smothered in others' houses. Moreover, of late, many of her relatives and women devotees had been moving about with her; and for most householders it was difficult to accommodate so many people at a time or for any long period. The expenses, too, were not inconsiderable. To arrange for rented houses was not easy for penniless monks like Swami Saradananda; and suitable houses were not always available at the proper time or place. Often enough, the houses were away from the Ganges thereby causing inconvenience to the Mother who had to have her daily bath in its holy waters. Besides, a permanent house was necessary to locate the offices for the Bengali periodical Udbodhan and to accommodate its staff. Taking into consideration all these factors, Swami Saradananda decided to launch on a bold scheme—he would have a permanent brick-built house at Baghbazar.

Kedarchandra Das had gifted away to the Belur Math on the 18th of July, 1906, a small plot of land (measuring about 260 sq. yards.) on the Gopal Neogi Lane, in Baghbazar, not very far from the Ganges. At first it was proposed to have a tiled shed on this land for the Udbodhan. But Swami Saradananda stood for a small brick structure. To start with he had in hand a meagre fund of Rs. 2,700/- got together through the sale of Swami Vivekananda's books, which amount, it was found on calculation, would not carry him beyond the foundation. Still he was sanguine of finishing the structure through loans. Such boldness did not go unchallenged, to be sure. But depending on the Mother's grace, he borrowed Rs. 5,700/- and started building at the end of 1907. But as the work proceeded, he had to borrow more money; and at last through his determination and bold execution, the Udbodhan got, at a cost of eleven thousand rupees, a permanent house to which it was shifted at the end of 1908. This house had then six rooms on the ground floor, three on the first, and one on the second, or ten rooms in all. The lowest rooms were meant for the Udbodhan and the others for the Mother and her companions. The Mother was at Jayrambati at that time and did not like to come even though the news of the completion of the house reached her.

The 23rd of May, 1909, is a red letter day in the annals of the premises No. 1, Udbodhan Lane, Baghbazar, Calcutta; for on that day the Holy Mother set her sacred foot there. Swami Saradananda felt all his labour repaid when he saw the Mother established in her own house. The situation of the house might not have been attractive, but it was after the Mother's mind in many ways. The land in front was then an open field without any hutment, and served as a grazing ground for stray cattle. The Ganges was near at hand, a full view of which could be had from the terrace. And as one's eyes extended far to the north, one could have a sight of the tops of the tall village trees in the outskirts of the city. The Mother was overjoyed to see the house and blessed Swami Saradananda heartily.

On the altar in the shrine was placed the Master's picture over which was hung a silk canopy made by Sister Nivedita. In the adjoining room there was a new couch for the Mother and near it an old bedstead for Radhu. The Mother disapproved of the arrangement saying, 'I can't live separated from the Master, nor is it proper.' So the two beds were placed in the shrine-room. The first night passed off this way. But next day, the Mother said that she felt uncomfortable on the couch without Radhu alongside of her, and Radhu, too, did not feel happy when alone. Accordingly, the couch was taken out and only the bedstead remained for both of them to sleep on. Thus in all affairs, big or small, Swami Saradananda considered himself a servant of the Mother and was ever ready to fulfil her slightest wish.

Mother Sarada

From, 'The Gospel of Holy Mother- Reminiscences of Swami Santananda'

One day, in the course of a conversation, the Mother said, "Is the Master's hair a trifle? After his passing away, when I went to Prayag (Allahabad). I carried some of his hair to offer at the confluence of the Ganges and Jamuna. Standing in still water I was holding the hair in my hand and was thinking of immersing it in the water, when suddenly a wave rose and swept away the hair from my hand. The water, already sacred, took the hair from my hand in order to increase its sanctity."

One day I asked the Mother, "Mother, there are some who have different Gurus for their Mantra and their Sannyasa. Now, whom should they meditate upon as their Guru?" The Mother replied. "The giver of the Mantra is the real Guru, for by the repetition of this Mantra one obtains dispassion, renunciation, and Sannyasa."

"A man's mind runs after bad things. If he wants to act virtuously, the mind fails to co-operate. In earlier days I used to leave my bed daily at three o'clock in the morning to meditate. One day I felt unwell and out of laziness dispensed with the meditation. Because of this my meditation was stopped for a few days. Therefore, if one wants to achieve something noble, he must be sincerely arduous and seized with a firm resolve. When I used to stay in the Nahabat, on moonlit nights I would look at the reflection of the moon in the still waters of the Ganges and weeping, pray to God, 'There are stains even on the moon, but let my mind be absolutely stainless.' During my stay there the Master forbade even Ramlal to see me, although he was a nephew. Now-a-days I talk with all and come out in the presence of others.

Reminiscences of Swami Tyagishananda

Swami Tyagishananda had made a study of many different monastic traditions, and was firm in his conviction that nothing matched the Ramakrishna Order. He had great devotion for Sri Ramakrishna and knew him to be a Divine Incarnation of this Age. He had vowed to read "The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna" 108 times in his life. His conviction that Sri Ramakrishna was a full embodiment of divinity is wonderfully expressed in a verse he had composed in Sanskrit as follows:

Tretayaam Ramaroopaya Dwaapare Krishnamurtaye

Kalau Purnavataraaya Ramakrishnaya Te Namaha

(One who came as Rama in Treta-Yuga, and Krishna in Dwapar-yuga, came in the Kali-yuga as Purna Avatar in form of Ramakrishna.)

There was a homeopathic doctor who was in awe of Swami Tyagishananda. He once said to the Swami that he meditates on him. The Swami said, "Meditate on Sri Ramakrishna; if you meditate on me you will go to hell."

Once a brahmacharin brought to him some prasad raisins, and Swamiji respectfully received them. The brahmachari warned him that some of the raisins have stems and it would be better if separates them. The Swami stared at him and replied, "What Guru Maharaj can eat, I also can eat." Then he immediately ate all of them.

Once at the Bangalore ashrama he shared with the younger inmates, "Yesterday a stray thought crossed my mind, just a simple stray thought. How nice it would be if I were to have a shawl. Unbelievable as it is, today did bring a shawl. I was frightened. This was an innocent, harmless desire; what if a bad thought had come to my mind, an evil desire? And if that was fulfilled immediately?" Saying this the Swami became very grave and continued, "Then and there I prayed : O Lord fulfil my desires only if they are good and helpful for my spiritual development. Otherwise not."

To him cultivation of every good quality or practice, whether it was service, meditation, study and scholarship, or austerity had only one purpose – God-Realization. All his actions echoed this teaching of Sri Ramakrishna that God-Realization was the only goal of human life. There was a forum in Bangalore founded in 1939 by Swami Srivasananda, a disciple of the Holy Mother, for imparting scriptural knowledge to interested people. It was called the 'Vedanta College' and operated out of Malleswaram. The classes were taken by the Founder-Swami, Swami Praneshananda, and Swami Tyagishananda. Swami Srivasanandaji had planned a syllabus in an organized way and each class was supposed to achieve a certain stipulated portion of the syllabus. Tyagishanandaji's way of taking classes was that he could spend many classes on even a single verse of Gita or Upanishads. Once when Srivasanandaji asked him which Upanishad he was teaching then, Tyagishandaji replied, "the Ramakrishna Upanishad." He meant that whatever he was taking was only to illustrate the teachings and ideals of Sri Ramakrishna. It was notable that while Tyagishanandaji made frequent references to Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji while taking classes on classical scriptural texts, he hardly spoke directly on them as subjects for lectures from the platform. He used to say that he did not consider himself adequately fit to speak on them.

The Swami had a picture of Swami Brahmananda in his room. Once during the maintenance of the room things were removed and the picture was not replaced. The brahmacharin who noticed this lapse brought it back regretting the inconvenience caused to him. The Swami merely said, "Do I need the support of an image after all these years."

His meditation could not be disturbed even with people moving around. He used to meditate outside the temple on the verandah near the place where people removed their slippers (this he started after a devotee reported that his sandals were missing; and interestingly he assumed the role of guarding the slippers in his own way with closed eyes).

Fanatic Bhakti

From the book, 'Swami Vivekananda in the West – New Discoveries'

There are sects in our country who worship God as Shiva, and others who worship Him as Vishnu. This man was a great worshipper of Shiva, and to that he added a tremendous hatred for all worshippers of Vishnu, and would not hear the name of Vishnu pronounced. There are a great number of worshippers of Vishnu in India, and he could not avoid hearing the name. So he bored two holes in his ears, and tied two little bells on to them, and whenever a man mentioned the name of Vishnu, he moved his head, and rang the bells and that prevented his hearing the noise.

But Shiva told him in a dream, "What a fool you are! I am Vishnu, and I am Shiva; they are not different, only in name; there are not two Gods". But this man said, "I don't care I will have nothing to do with this Vishnu business".

He had a little statue of Shiva, and made it very nice, built an altar for it. One day he bought some beautiful incense and went home to light some of the incense for his God. While the fumes of his incense were rising in the air he found that the image was divided into two : one half remained Shiva, and the other half was Vishnu. Then the man jumped up and put his finger under the nostril of Vishnu so that not a particle of the smell could get there.

Then Shiva became disgusted, and the man became a demon. He is the father of all fanatics, the "bell-eared" demon. He is respected by the boys of India, and they worship him. It is a very peculiar kind of worship. They make a clay image, and worship him with all sorts of horrible smelling flowers. There are some flowers in the forests in India which have a most pestilential smell. They worship him with these, and then take big sticks and beat the image. He is the father of all fanatics, who hate all other gods except their own.

Goddess Saraswati

Goddess Saraswati is often depicted as a beautiful woman dressed in pure white, often seated on a white lotus symbolizing light, knowledge and truth. Her iconography follows white themes from dress to flowers to swan – all of it symbolizing Sattwa Guna or purity, discrimination for true knowledge, insight and wisdom. She is generally shown to have four arms. The hands symbolically mirror her husband Brahma's four heads, representing manas (mind, sense), buddhi (intellect, reasoning), chitta (imagination, creativity), and ahamkāra (ego).

The four hands hold items with symbolic meaning –

- A pustaka (book or script), The book she holds symbolizes the Vedas representing the universal, divine, eternal, and true knowledge as well as all forms of learning
- A mala (rosary, garland), a mala of crystals, representing the power of meditation, inner reflection, and spirituality.
- A water pot- A pot of water represents the purifying power to separate right from wrong, the clean from the unclean, and essence from the inessential. In some texts, the pot of water is symbolism for soma – the drink that liberates and leads to knowledge.
- A musical instrument (veena) represents all creative arts and sciences, and her holding it symbolizes expressing knowledge that creates harmony. Saraswati is also associated with anurāga, the love for and rhythm of music, which represents all emotions and feelings expressed in speech or music.
- A hamsa – a swan – is often shown near her feet. In Hindu mythology, the hamsa is a sacred bird, which if offered a mixture of milk and water, is said to be able to drink the milk alone. It thus symbolizes the ability to discriminate between good and evil, essence from the outward show, and the eternal from the evanescent. Due to her association with the swan, Saraswati is also referred to as Hamsavāhini. The swan is also a symbolism for spiritual perfection, transcendence and moksha.

Sometimes a citrakekhala (also called mayura, peacock) is shown beside the goddess. The peacock symbolizes colourful splendour, the celebration of dance, and – as the devourer of snakes – the alchemical ability to transmute the serpent poison of self into the radiant plumage of enlightenment.

She is usually depicted near a flowing river or another body of water, which depiction may constitute a reference to her early history as a river goddess.

There are many avatars and forms of Goddess Saraswati. Saraswati is not just the goddess of knowledge and wisdom but also, she is the Brahmavidya herself, the goddess of the wisdom of ultimate truth.

Experiences of the Great Mystics

From the book, 'Adventures in Vedanta' by Swami Yatiswarananda.

One of the greatest of the ancient Church Fathers, the great Christian mystic, St. Augustine was, in the beginning, a pleasure-loving youth. Then a tremendous change came over him and, as he prayed, a spiritual force which the mind itself was unable to grasp came to his assistance; it enabled him to look beyond the vortex of his ego and he saw something permeating his ego. He came directly in contact with God—the Divine Reality—who, as he said 'precedes all human knowledge and exists independently of the ability of the human mind to know Him'. His prayer was: 'I beseech Thee to discover to me myself.' The sinner became a saint. The egocentric became cosmocentric.

Rabbia, the lady mystic of Sufism, was sick. Two holy men visited her. One of them said: 'Whose prayer is pure will God's chastisements endure.' The other uttered his experience: 'He who loves his master's choice will in chastisement rejoice.' But Rabbia replied: 'O men of grace, he who sees his Master's face, will not in his prayers recall that he is chastised at all!' Rabbia would pray: 'O my Lord, if I worship from fear of hell, burn me in hell-fire. If I worship Thee for hope of paradise, exclude me from paradise. But if I worship Thee for Thine own sake, then withhold not from me Thy eternal beauty.'

When, by following the path of worship and prayer, the spiritual seeker feels the living presence of God within his own soul as well as in all beings, the false ego which hypnotizes the soul disappears yielding place to a new spiritual consciousness. He thus rises above the phenomenal existence and calculations and remains absorbed in God. Chaitanya, in his earlier days, was a great scholar fond of disputations and discourses. But his meeting with the Vaishnava saint, Isvara Puri, at Gaya, and his visit to the temple there brought about a great change in him. Then he had visions in the temple which completely transformed him. He began to preach divine love, bringing light and devotion to many. He had dehypnotized himself. 'Love for the name of God, compassion for all loving beings and loving service to the devotees of the Lord' became his life-long message. De-hypnotized souls not only come to attain a new spirit of consciousness and joy but these the compassionate ones try to share with their fellow beings. Man is ever conscious of the existence of the Self. Every time he says: "My body, my mind, my intelligence," etc., he unconsciously admits of an "I"—of the Self. But he is unable to manifest his real nature. Hence the necessity of spiritual disciplines, and the firm will to unfold his latent divinity.' This is exactly what the learned Vivekananda also taught. When the so-called literate and the illiterate experience the same Divine Spirit and draw their inspiration from the same Source, they speak the same language and give expression to the same spiritual ideal.

UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Events	Date & Time
Birthday celebration of Sri Ramakrishna	February 14 – 11.00 am <i>Puja will be streamed live on YouTube.</i>
Maha Shivaratri	February 15 – 5.30 pm <i>Puja will be streamed live on YouTube.</i>
Shri Ramanavami	March 27 – 6.30 pm <i>Puja will be 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>

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.

Tales and Parables of Sri Ramakrishna

The Pandit who could not swim:

Once several men were crossing the Ganges in a boat. One of them, a pandit, was making a great display of his erudition, saying that he had studied various books—the Vedas, the Vedanta, and the six systems of philosophy. He asked a fellow passenger, "Do you know the Vedanta?" "No, revered sir." "The Samkhya and the Patanjala?" "No, revered sir." "Have you read no philosophy whatsoever?" "No, revered sir." The pandit was talking in this vain way and the passenger sitting in silence when a great storm arose and the boat was about to sink. The passenger said to the pandit, "Sir, can you swim?" "No", replied the pandit. The passenger said, "I don't know Samkhya or the Patanjala, but I can swim."

What will a man gain by knowing many scriptures? The one thing needful is to know how to cross the river of the world. God alone is real, and all else is illusory.

As one thinks, so one receives:

A Magician was showing his tricks before a king. Now and then he exclaimed: "Come confusion! Come delusion! O King, give me money! Give me clothes!" Suddenly his tongue turned upward and clove to the roof of his mouth. He experienced kumbhaka. He could utter neither word nor sound, and became motionless. People thought he was dead. They built a vault of bricks and buried him there in that posture. After a thousand years someone dug into the vault. Inside it people found a man seated in samadhi. They took him for a holy man and worshipped him. When they shook him his tongue was loosened and regained its normal position. The magician became conscious of the outer world and cried, as he had a thousand years before: "Come confusion! Come delusion! O King, give me money! Give me clothes!"

God is the Kalpataru, the wish-fulfilling tree. You will certainly get whatever you ask of him. But you must pray standing near the Kalpataru. Only then will your prayer be fulfilled. But you must remember another thing. God knows our inner feeling. A man gets the fulfilment of the desire he cherishes while practising sadhana. As one thinks, so one receives.

A Siddha stops the storm:

Once a great Siddha was sitting on the sea-shore when there came a great storm. The Siddha, being greatly distressed by it, exclaimed, "let the storm cease!" and his words were fulfilled. Just then a ship was going at a distance with all sails set, and as the wind suddenly died away, it capsized, drowning all who were on board the ship.

Now the sin of causing the death of so many persons accrued to the Siddha, and for this reason he lost all his occult powers and had to suffer in purgatory.

Vedanta Society of Toronto

Minister and Teacher- Swami Kripamayananda, Ramakrishna Order of India

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 11.00am Lecture: <i>'Amazing Transformation- Adbutananda'</i>	2	3	4	5	6 7:30pm Scripture class <i>'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'</i>	7 6am to 6pm VIGIL
8 11.00am Lecture: <i>'Eternal Shiva'</i> 5:00pm RAMNAAM	9	10	11	12	13 7:30pm Scripture class <i>'Uddhava Gita'</i>	14 11.00am BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA
15 5.30pm MAHA SHIVARATRI	16 Winter Vacation starts	17	18	19	20 7:30pm NO SCRIPTURE CLASS	21
22 NO SUNDAY LECTURE	23	24	25	26	27 7:30pm NO SCRIPTURE CLASS	28

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.

Winter Vacation- February 16 to March 22, 2026

The Vedanta Society will have its winter vacation from February 16 until March 22, and the Society activities will remain suspended for the Winter Vacation, except the Morning and Evening prayers.

Vedanta Vidya Mandir classes will continue in April as per the scheduled programme.

Newsletter will not be published for the month of March 2026.

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.