



# Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

120 Emmett Ave. Toronto, ON M6M 2E6 CANADA

Tel.: 416-240-7262; Email: [toronto@rkmm.org](mailto:toronto@rkmm.org) Website: [www.vedantatoronto.ca](http://www.vedantatoronto.ca)

## Newsletter March and April 2024

### Words to Inspire

"Work, devotion, discrimination – each one is a path to reach union with God. With the same whole souled devotion with which a devotee worships the Lord in the shrine, he must serve the Lord in the poor, in the sick, in the lowly."  
-----Swami Brahmananda

### **Passing away of the soul**

(Written by Swami Vivekananda to Mrs. Ole Bull whom Swamiji called "Dhira Mata", the "Steady Mother" on the occasion of the loss of her father.) Brooklyn, 20th January 1895.

I had a premonition of your father's giving up the old body and it is not my custom to write to anyone when a wave of would-be inharmonious Mâyâ strikes him. But these are the great turning points in life, and I know that you are unmoved. The surface of the sea rises and sinks alternately, but to the observant soul — the child of light — each sinking reveals more and more of the depth and of the beds of pearls and coral at the bottom. Coming and going is all pure delusion. The soul never comes nor goes. Where is the place to which it shall go when all space is in the soul? When shall be the time for entering and departing when all time is in the soul?

The earth moves, causing the illusion of the movement of the sun; but the sun does not move. So Prakriti, or Maya, or Nature, is moving, changing, unfolding veil after veil, turning over leaf after leaf of this grand book — while the witnessing soul drinks in knowledge, unmoved, unchanged. All souls that ever have been, are, or shall be, are all in the present tense and — to use a material simile — are all standing at one geometrical point. Because the idea of space does occur in the soul, therefore all that were ours, are ours, and will be ours, are always with us, were always with us, and will be always with us. We are in them. They are in us. Take these cells. Though each separate, they are all nevertheless inseparably joined at A B. There they are one. Each is an individual, yet all are one at the axis A B. None can escape from that axis, and however broken or torn the circumference, yet by standing at the axis, we may enter any one of the chambers. This axis is the Lord. There we are one with Him, all in all, and all in God.

The cloud moves across the face of the moon, creating the illusion that the moon is moving. So nature, body, matter moves on, creating the illusion that the soul is moving. Thus we find at last that, that instinct (or inspiration?) which men of every race, whether high or low, have had to feel, viz the presence of the departed about them, is true intellectually also.

Each soul is a star, and all stars are set in that infinite azure, that eternal sky, the Lord. There is the root, the reality, the real individuality of each and all. Religion began with the search after some of these stars that had passed beyond our horizon, and ended in finding them all in God, and ourselves in the same place. The whole secret is, then, that your father has given up the old garment he was wearing and is standing where he was through all eternity. Will he manifest another such garment in this or any other world? I sincerely pray that he may not, until he does so in full consciousness. I pray that none may be dragged anywhither by the unseen power of his own past actions. I pray that all may be free, that is to say, may know that they are free. And if they are to dream again, let us pray that their dreams be all of peace and bliss. . . .

Yours etc.,

Vivekananda.

From The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda by Swami Vivekananda, Volume 5, Epistles - First Series

### **KARMA YOGA ACTIVITIES**

It is a great opportunity to provide your services to the Vedanta Society of Toronto. We have started creating groups of volunteers to administer and take care of few operations - maintenance related work in the ashram. Kindly come forward and volunteer time towards maintaining and managing the facilities. If interested in volunteering, kindly send email or contact Abhijit Bhattacharya on 416-569-9401, indicating the Services that you are interested in and days you can be available for volunteering.

**THANK YOU AGAIN!**

## **Sri Ramakrishna's living presence in Belur Math**

It was Swamiji's lifelong desire to preserve the mortal remains (holy ashes) of Sri Ramakrishna and enshrine it in a grand temple dedicated to him. This could not happen during Swamiji's lifetime. So, he installed Sri Ramakrishna in what is now known as the 'old temple'. However, before leaving his body, Swamiji had a plan ready for a monumental temple. Following his directions, Swami Vijnanananda, his brother disciple and a qualified civil engineer drew the plan. Though Swamiji did not live to see this temple, he assured that he would see it from 'above'.

The foundation stone for the temple was laid by Swami Shivananda on 13 March 1929, Sri Ramakrishna's birthday. For paucity of funds, the construction could not begin immediately. It started only after five years with substantial contributions from Miss Helen Rubel (also known as Bhakti) and Mrs. Anna Worcester (also known as Annapurna). By their munificence, these two American devotees have become inseparably connected with the history of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, and have endeared themselves to all devotees of Sri Ramakrishna.

Before the construction began, the foundation site had to be shifted about a hundred feet from the original spot, as advised by engineers. Swami Vijnanananda, the then president of the Order, re-laid the foundation on 16 July 1935, the day of Guru-purnima. In the morning, he went to the shrine to seek Sri Ramakrishna's blessings. The auspicious time fixed for laying the foundation was 8.15 am. He was known for his punctuality, but that day he spent a long time in the shrine. It was past 8.30 a.m. when he came out of the shrine. When asked about the delay he said, 'What I shall do! Sri Ramakrishna did not allow me to take leave of him.'

On the foundation day too, something mysterious happened. At the beginning of the ritual, Swami Vijnanananda stood in front of the picture of Sri Ramakrishna, decorated for the purpose, holding in his hands the arghya (flowers, sandal paste, vilva leaf, and so on) to be offered to Sri Ramakrishna. Then blew a gentle breeze that displaced the arghya from his hands and placed it right on the spot where it was to be offered to Sri Ramakrishna. It was as if Swamiji had offered this first arghya to the Master. Swami Vijnanananda then offered another arghya to the Master.

The new temple was dedicated by Swami Vijnanananda on 14 January 1938, the day of Makara Sankranti. After the dedication he said: 'I had said to Swamiji, "Swamiji, you told me that you would witness the temple dedication from above. Here, behold! Sri Ramakrishna, whom you have installed, is seated in the new temple, which is built according to your own design." Then I distinctly saw there (showing the south-western direction) Swamiji, Brahmanandaji, Mahapurushji,

Saradanandaji, Turiyanandaji and Akhandanandaji—all joyfully watching and blessing the dedication!'

About the presence of Sri Ramakrishna in Belur Math, Swami Shivananda observed: 'Sri Ramakrishna is living here in all his glory. We live in his presence always as we lived and talked with him in Dakshineswar. By his presence, the mind is brimming with bliss.' Sri Ramakrishna's disciples were particular that the novices at Belur Math were always conscious of Sri Ramakrishna's eternal presence at Belur Math. Swami Shivananda once admonished a young swami for his carelessness while preparing fruit offering to Sri Ramakrishna: 'What kind of service is this! You have not removed the fibres properly from the bananas and oranges. Be careful not to commit mistakes while serving Sri Ramakrishna. He is living, so worship him with great care. He is accepting the worship; I see it.'

Swamiji too had emphatically said, 'The Lord has not yet given up the Ramakrishna form. Some see Him in that form even now and receive instructions from Him, and all can see Him if they so desire.'

### **Swami Vivekananda on Belur Math**

Sri Ramakrishna said to me [at Cossipore], "Wherever you will take me on your shoulders, there I will go and stay, be it under a tree or in a hut." It is therefore that I am myself carrying him [his remains] on my shoulders to the new Math [monastery] grounds. Know it for certain that Sri Ramakrishna will keep his seat fixed there, for the welfare of many, for a long time to come.

Each devotee colors Sri Ramakrishna in the light of his own understanding and each forms his own idea of him from his peculiar standpoint. He was, as it were, a great sun, and each one of us is eyeing him, as it were, through a different kind of colored glass and coming to look upon that one sun as particolored....

This Math that we are building will harmonize all creeds, all standpoints. Just as Sri Ramakrishna held highly liberal views, this Math, will be a center for propagating similar ideas. The blazing light of universal harmony that will emanate from here will flood the whole world.

Through the will of Sri Ramakrishna, his Dharmakshetra, sanctified spot, has been established today. Do you know what I am thinking of at this moment? This Math will be a center of learning and spiritual discipline. Householders of a virtuous turn like yourselves will build houses on the surrounding land and live there, and sannyasins, men of renunciation, will live in the center, while on that plot of land on the south of the Math, buildings will be erected for English and American disciples to live in. . . .

Everything will come about in time. I am but laying the foundation. There will be lots of further development in future. Some portion of it I shall live to work out.

## **Important Notice – Tax receipts**

*The Tax receipts for year 2023 are ready and will be sent out shortly by email or mail. Once you receive the receipt, if there are any concerns, please contact us at [toronto@rkmm.org](mailto:toronto@rkmm.org).*

## Teachings of Buddha

### Noble Eight-Fold Path or Middle Way

The path to ending the suffering of people is known as Noble Eightfold Path or Middle Way. Noble Eightfold Path is one of the principal teachings of Buddha. These teachings of Buddha described the way leading to a cessation of dukkha and the state of self-awakening. The Noble Eightfold path is described below:

#### 1. Right View

What is right view?

Knowledge about the cause of suffering, knowledge to end the cause of suffering, knowledge to way of path to end the suffering. This is called right view.

#### 2. Right Intention

Right intention can also be called as "right thought". Understanding the right view, one should be able to differentiate between right intention and wrong intention. One should be resolved to be free from ill will is what right intention will teach you.

#### 3. Right Speech

One should always keep themselves from lying and ill speech. One should make best use of their speech and abandon false speech and always speak truth.

#### 4. Right Conduct

Never hurting others, criticizing others, well behaving, are the right conduct. One should never conduct any actions that may harm others.

#### 5. Right Livelihood

"Do not earn your living by harming others. Do not seek happiness by making others unhappy."

One should never choose living where his way of living may directly or indirectly harm others.

#### 6. Right Effort

Right effort can also be called "right endeavor". One should always try to take any action on the goodwill of people.

#### 7. Right Mindfulness

People must constantly keep their mind to phenomena that may affect the body and mind. This means one must be aware of their thoughts, words, and action.

#### 8. Right Concentration

Also known as "right meditation", Right concentration teach people to concentrate and focus one thing or object at a time. Thus, leading quiet and peaceful mind.

Following these 8 Noble Eightfold Path, one can cultivate their wisdom and thus leading to the path to attain "nirvana".

#### The Triple Jewel

Lord Buddha establishes the three refuges for people to follow his teachings. A refuge is the place where people can rely on and go to for the purpose of safety. The three refuges that Lord Buddha establishes are as follows:

*The Buddha is the guide*

*The Dhamma is the path*

*The Sangha is the teachers and companions along the way.*

#### The Five Percepts

In Buddhism, Lord Buddha himself establishes five most important rules and called them Five Percepts.

*Avoid Killing*

*Avoid taking anything which is not yours*

*Avoid sexual misconduct*

*Avoid lying*

*Avoid any false drinks*

## Rama's Discourse – Navavidha Bhakti

Rama delivers his discourse on navavidha bhakti (ninefold devotion) to Shabari.

Such pure devotion is expressed in nine ways –

#### Nava vidha bhakti - Nine forms of devotion are:

- *Shravanam* – Hearing the names and glories of the Lord
- *Keertanam* – Chanting His glories
- *Smaranam* – Remembering the Lord
- *Paada sevnam* – Serving the Lord's feet
- *Archanam* – Worshiping the Lord
- *Vandanam* – Offering obeisance unto the Lord
- *Daasyam* – Serving the Lord as His servant
- *Sakhyam* – Developing friendship with the Lord
- *Aatma Nivedanam* – Total surrender of oneself to the Lord

Then Rama tells Shabari, "Anyone who practices one of these nine modes of My bhakti pleases Me most and reaches Me without fail."

## **Birth of an incarnation**

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

### **Need of the hour**

One is surprised to find how far this decay of religion has spread all over the world at the present time. If there is really such a thing as religion, and if men have the power to realize it, through the grace of God, there is no doubt whatsoever that the modern age, steeped in sensuous pleasures, has strayed far away from it. That is the reason why science, although enlarging the scope of modern life by providing men with all kinds of means to enjoyment, has failed to bring them peace. Who will come to the rescue? Whose heart will be so moved by this restlessness and agony of the world as to make him ignore all sense-pleasures and discover a new mode of religion suited to the age? Who will reverse the downward course of religion in East and West, and once again teach men to follow the path to peace?

The divine Lord has promised in the Gita that, through His Maya, He will assume a human body and manifest His powers whenever religion declines and will help men to obtain peace. Will not the need of the age rouse His compassion? Will not man's helplessness and despair urge God to assume a body?

The demand of the times has, O reader, actually brought this about; for the divine Lord has, in truth, once again been born as the spiritual Teacher of the world. Listen with faith to His gracious message: As many faiths, so many paths and you will realize the divine Lord through any spiritual practice performed with a sincere heart. Let us dwell in admiration on the unheard-of renunciation and austerities practised by Him in order to bring back that transcendent knowledge to the world. Come, let us discuss and meditate on that holy life, free from the slightest taint of lust, and thus purify ourselves.

### **Birth of Gadadhar**

It was some ten minutes before dawn that Chandradevi felt the first pangs of labour. Dhani helped her to the lying-in room, and there, almost immediately, she gave birth to a male child. After doing the needful for Chandra, Dhani turned

her attention to the baby only to find that it had disappeared from the place where she had kept it. In alarm she took the lamp to look for the child and found that it had rolled down the ground covered with blood and slime into the hollow fireplace and was lying there, with its little body adorned with ashes, and still not crying! Dhani tenderly picked up the child, washed it, and looking at it in the light wondered at its beauty and its size. It looked like a six-months-old infant! Chandramani's friends, Prasanna and other women of the Laha family, were sent for. As soon as they arrived, Dhani told them what had happened. At the sacred solemn hour before sunrise, the sound of the conch filled that humble cottage—the scene of Kshudiram's austerity—and proclaimed to the world the advent of a great soul. Ascertaining the signs of the zodiac under which the child was born, Kshudiram, well versed in astrology, found that the boy had come into the world at an especially auspicious moment.

According to the scriptures, the parents of incarnations like Rama, Krishna and others, knew through their spiritual visions both before and after the birth of their sons, that these were under the special protection of Providence. But, blinded by parental affection, they forgot that fact, and would therefore always be anxious about their welfare. This applies to Kshudiram and his wife Chandradevi also. For, the lotus face of their loving child made them often forget the divine dream at Gaya and the celestial vision near the Siva temple, and they began to devise various means for his proper care and nourishment. The news of the birth was sent to Ramchandra, Kshudiram's prosperous nephew, at Medinipur. Fearing that there would not be sufficient milk for his uncle's poor family, he sent them a milch cow, thereby removing Kshudiram's anxiety on that score. But though all that was wanted for the new-born child came in unexpected ways from different quarters, there was no end to the anxiety of the parents. Time thus rolled on.

## **ANNUAL SUMMER RETREAT 2024**

The Vedanta Society will hold its Annual Summer Retreat on June 29 and 30, 2024.

**Swami Sarvapriyananda, Minister in-Charge, Vedanta Society of New York**, will be conducting the Retreat.

**Registration fee is \$150.00 per person.**

Participants are requested to email their names for Registration to <[toronto@rkmm.org](mailto:toronto@rkmm.org)> before **June 1, 2024**. The direction for depositing the Registration Fee and subsequently the Confirmation of Registration, will be sent by the Vedanta Society on First Come First Served basis.

**Registration is now open.**  
**SEATS ARE LIMITED.**

## UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Events	Date & Time
<b>Maha Shivaratri</b>	<b>March 8, 2024 @ 6.30pm</b> <i>The celebration will also be streamed live on YouTube.</i>
<b>Birthday celebration of Sri Ramakrishna</b>	<b>March 10, 2024 @ 11am</b> <i>The celebration will also be streamed live on YouTube.</i>
<b>Ram Navami</b>	<b>April 17, 2024 @ 6.30pm</b> <i>The celebration will also be streamed live on YouTube.</i>
<b>Buddha Jayanti</b>	<b>May 19, 2024 @ 11am</b> <i>The celebration will also 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:** For details on Soup Kitchen, please see the 'Calendar of Events' on the next page for details.

### Soup Kitchen Dates

Starts at 9.30AM

Main coordinator: Sayan Roy 416-305-4637

#### March 2024

**Saturdays:**

March 2, 2024  
March 9, 2024  
March 23, 2024  
March 30, 2024

**Wednesdays:**

NO Soup Kitchen

**Thursdays:**

March 21, 2024  
March 28, 2024

#### April 2024

**Saturdays:**

April 6, 2024  
April 13, 2024  
April 20, 2024  
April 27, 2024

**Wednesdays:**

April 24, 2024

**Thursdays:**

April 18, 2024  
April 25, 2024

# Vedanta Society of Toronto

Minister and Teacher- Swami Kripamayananda, Ramakrishna Order of India

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### March 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					<u>1</u> <b>7:30pm</b> Scripture class- ONLINE ONLY 'Uddhava Gita'	<u>2</u> <b>6am to 6pm</b> <b>VIGIL</b>
<u>3</u> <b>11:00am</b> Guided Meditation on Shiva  <b>5:00pm</b> <b>RAMNAAM</b>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u> <b>6:30pm</b> <b>Maha</b> <b>Shivaratri</b>	<u>9</u>
<u>10</u> <b>11:00am</b> <b>Birthday celebration</b> <b>of Sri Ramakrishna</b>	<b><u>March break begins March 11</u></b> <b><u>and ends April 16</u></b>					

### April 2024

<u>14</u> NO Lecture	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u> <b>6:30pm</b> <b>Ram</b> <b>Navami</b>	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u> <b>7:30pm</b> Scripture class 'Uddhava Gita'	<u>20</u> <b>6am to 6pm</b> <b>VIGIL</b>
<u>21</u> <b>11:00am</b> Lecture: 'Rama-The Purushottama'  <b>5:00pm</b> <b>RAMNAAM</b>	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u> <b>7:30pm</b> Scripture class 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>27</u>
<u>28</u> <b>11:00am</b> Lecture: 'Enquiry in Vedanta' By Swami Vidyanathananda	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>				

### **March Break: from March 11 to April 16, 2024**

The Vedanta Society will have March Break from March 11 to April 16, 2024. Vedanta Society activities will remain suspended during the March Break except the Morning and Evening prayers.

### **AN APPEAL FOR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL for the Year 2024 & 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 2024, are requested to send their details by email to [tonto@rkmm.org](mailto:tonto@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.