



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

120 Emmett Ave. Toronto, ON M6M 2E6 CANADA

Tel.: 416-240-7262; Email: toronto@rkmm.org Website: www.vedantatoronto.ca

Newsletter May 2025

Words to Inspire

"Hinduism cannot live without Buddhism, nor Buddhism without Hinduism. Then realise what the separation has shown to us, that the Buddhists cannot stand without the brain and philosophy of the Brahmins, nor the Brahmin without the heart of the Buddhist."

-----Swami Vivekananda

Buddhism is one of our sects. It was founded by a great man called Gautama, who became disgusted at the eternal metaphysical discussions of his day, and the cumbrous rituals, and more especially with the caste system. Some people say that we are born to a certain state, and therefore we are superior to others who are not thus born. He was also against the tremendous priestcraft. He preached a religion in which there was no motive power, and was perfectly agnostic about metaphysics or theories about God. He was often asked if there was a God, and he answered, he did not know. When asked about right conduct, he would reply, "Do good and be good." There came five Brahmins, who asked him to settle their discussion. One said, "Sir, my book says that God is such and such, and that this is the way to come to God." Another said, "That is wrong, for my book says such and such, and this is the way to come to God"; and so the others. He listened calmly to all of them, and then asked them one by one, "Does any one of your books say that God becomes angry, that He ever injures anyone, that He is impure?" "No, Sir, they all teach that God is pure and good." "Then, my friends, why do you not become pure and good first, that you may know what God is?"

He was the only man who was bereft of all motive power. There were other great men who all said they were the Incarnations of God Himself, and that those who would believe in them would go to heaven. But what did Buddha say with his dying breath? "None can help you; help yourself; work out your own salvation." He said about himself, "Buddha is the name of infinite knowledge, infinite as the sky; I, Gautama, have reached that state; you will all reach that too if you struggle for it." Bereft of all motive power, he did not want to go to heaven, did not want money; he gave up his throne and everything else and went about begging his bread through the streets of India, preaching for the good of men and animals with a heart as wide as the ocean.

He was the only man who was ever ready to give up his life for animals to stop a sacrifice.

He once said to a king, "If the sacrifice of a lamb helps you to go to heaven, sacrificing a man will help you better; so sacrifice me."

The king was astonished. And yet this man was without any motive power. He stands as the perfection of the active type, and the very height to which he attained shows that through the power of work we can also attain to the highest spirituality. To many the path becomes easier if they believe in God. But the life of Buddha shows that even a man who does not believe in God, has no metaphysics, belongs to no sect, and does not go to any church, or temple, and is a confessed materialist, even he can attain to the highest. We have no right to judge him. I wish I had one infinitesimal part of Buddha's heart. Buddha may or may not have believed in God; that does not matter to me. He reached the same state of perfection to which others come by Bhakti—love of God—Yoga, or Jñāna. His doctrine was this: Why is there misery in our life? Because we are selfish. We desire things for ourselves—that is why there is misery. What is the way out? The giving up of the self. The self does not exist; the phenomenal world, all this that we perceive, is all that exists. There is nothing called soul underlying the cycle of life and death. There is the stream of thought, one thought following another in succession, each thought coming into existence and becoming non-existent at the same moment, that is all; there is no thinker of the thought, no soul. The body is changing all the time; so is mind, consciousness. The self therefore is a delusion. All selfishness comes of holding on to the self, to this illusory self. If we know the truth that there is no self, then we will be happy and make others happy.

The life of Buddha has an especial appeal. All my life I have been very fond of Buddha. I have more veneration for that character than for any other—that boldness, that fearlessness, and that tremendous love! He was born for the good of men.

From 'Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol 4'.

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.

Is Vedānta the future religion

(From the "Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol 8)

Vedānta denies the authority of any book over any other book. It denies emphatically that any one book can contain all the truths about God, soul, the ultimate reality. Those of you who have read the Upanishads remember that they say again and again, "Not by the reading of books can one realise the Self". Also it finds veneration for some particular person still more difficult to uphold. Those of you who are students of Vedānta—by Vedānta is always meant the Upanishads—know that this is the only religion that does not cling to any person. Not one man or woman has ever become the object of worship among the Vedantins. It cannot be. A man is no more worthy of worship than any bird, any worm. We are all brothers. The difference is only in degree. I am exactly the same as the lowest worm. You see how very little room there is in Vedānta for any man to stand ahead of us and for us to go and worship him—he dragging us on and we being saved by him. Vedānta does not give you that. No book, no man to worship, nothing. It does not teach the old idea of God at all. In place of that God who sat above the clouds and managed the affairs of the world without asking our permission, who created us out of nothing just because He liked it and made us undergo all this misery just because He liked it, Vedānta teaches the God that is in everyone, has become everyone and everything.

What does Vedānta teach us? In the first place, it teaches that you need not even go out of yourself to know the truth. All the past and all the future are here in the present. No man ever saw the past. Did any one of you see the past? When you think you are knowing the past, you only imagine the past in the present moment. To see the future, you would have to bring it down to the present, which is the only reality—the rest is imagination. This present is all that is. There is only the One. All is here right now. One moment in infinite time is quite as complete and all-inclusive as every other moment. All that is and was and will be, is here in the present. Let anybody try to imagine anything outside of it—he will not succeed. This forms the one great question asked by Vedānta: Why are people so afraid? The answer is that they have made themselves helpless and dependent on others. We are so lazy, we do not want to do anything for ourselves. We want a Personal God, a saviour or a prophet to do everything for us.

Once I was invited to a dinner. The hostess asked me to say grace. I said, "I will say grace to you, madam. My grace and thanks are to you". When I work, I say grace to myself. Praise be unto me that I worked hard and acquired what I have!

All the time you work hard and bless somebody else, because you are superstitious, you are afraid. No more of these superstitions bred through thousands of years! It takes a little hard work to become spiritual. Superstitions are all materialism, because they are all based on the consciousness of body, body, body. No spirit there. Spirit has no superstitions—it is beyond the vain desires of the body.

But here and there these vain desires are being projected even into the realm of the spirit. I have attended several spiritualistic meetings. In one, the leader was a woman. She said to me, "Your mother and grandfather came to me". She said that they greeted her and talked to her. But my mother is living yet! People like to think that even after death their relatives continue to exist in the same bodies, and the spiritualists play on their superstitions. I would be very sorry to know that my dead father is still wearing his filthy body. People get consolation from this, that their fathers are all encased in matter. In another place they brought me Jesus Christ. I said, "Lord, how do you do?" It makes me feel hopeless. If that great saintly man is still wearing the body, what is to become of us poor creatures? The spiritualists did not allow me to touch any of those gentlemen. Even if these were real, I would not want them. I think, "Mother, Mother! atheists—that is what people really are! Just the desire for these five senses! Not satisfied with what they have here, they want more of the same when they die!

I have been asked many times, "Why do you laugh so much and make so many jokes?" I become serious sometimes—when I have stomach-ache! The Lord is all blissfulness. He is the reality behind all that exists, He is the goodness, the truth in everything. You are His incarnations. That is what is glorious. The nearer you are to Him, the less you will have occasions to cry or weep. The further we are from Him, the more will long faces come. The more we know of Him, the more misery vanishes. God is the infinite, impersonal being—ever existent, unchanging, immortal, fearless; and you are all His incarnations, His embodiments. This is the God of Vedānta, and His heaven is everywhere. In this heaven dwell all the Personal Gods there are—you yourselves. Exit praying and laying flowers in the temples! Worship everything as God—every form is His temple. All else is delusion. Always look within, never without. Such is the God that Vedānta preaches, and such is His worship. Naturally there is no sect, no creed, no caste in Vedānta. The whole universe is one existence. There cannot be anything else. Out of diversities we are all going towards this universal existence. It is all knowledge, all science—the realisation of this unity.

Unity is knowledge, diversity is ignorance. This knowledge is your birthright. The whole universe is one existence. There cannot be anything else. Out of diversities we are all going towards this universal existence. Families into tribes, tribes into races, races into nations, nations into humanity—how many wills going to the One! It is all knowledge, all science—the realisation of this unity. Unity is knowledge, diversity is ignorance. This knowledge is your birthright. Men are still hypnotised into abject degradation. The hour comes when great men shall arise and cast off these kindergartens of religion and shall make vivid and powerful the true religion, the worship of the spirit by the spirit.

Swami Vijnanananda and his mystic vision

(From "The Vedanta Kesari", November 1946)

Swami Vijnanananda was one of the sixteen monastic disciples of Sri-Ramakrishna, and became the fourth President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. He was born on the 30th October, 1868 and passed away at the age of seventy on the 25th April, 1938 at Allahabad where he had established in 1910 a branch of the Ramakrishna Math. Swami Vivekananda fondly addressed him as the Bishop of Allahabad. Of his monastic life, extending for about four decades, nearly 37 years were spent at the sacred site of Allahabad in study and tapasya, in work and worship. By a mere touch the Master transmitted spirituality to his disciple.

The Swami used to relate his two visions of Lord Buddha, one at Sarnath, Benares and the other at Pegu, Burma. Sometime in 1918 or 1919 he was at Benares. One fine morning he went on foot to Sarnath to see the Museum there. In the Museum the guide was showing him a beautiful image of Buddha at whose foot a short description of Lord Buddha's life from birth to death was given. While he was intently looking at the image, the external world vanished from him and he beheld a boundless ocean of Light. He stood like a point on its shore and was beholding the immaterial light spell-bound. He returned on foot to the Ashram at Benares by 4 or 5 in the afternoon ; but his ecstatic mood brought on by the vision persisted, and continued to enthrall him for three days. To Swami Prabhavananda and Sister Lalita of Hollywood Vedanta centre, he described this vision thus : 'Suddenly I lost outer consciousness. My mind got rid of all mentations. An ocean of light engulfed me in the midst of it. This light was redolent of peace, bliss and wisdom. I felt I was full of the Buddha and had no existence separate from the Blessed One. I cannot say how long I remained immersed in that state. The guide was under the impression that I felt sleepy. So he tried to rouse me and thus I came to my senses.'

In December, 1936 the Swami went to Rangoon on a flying visit. From Rangoon he motored to Pegu to see the huge lying statue of Lord Buddha there. All his companions came out of the Pagoda soon after seeing the colossal statue.

But the Swami stood still and speechless. All waited for him a pretty long time; but the Swami did not move. He was in an exalted mood. After some time when his mind came down from the super-conscious plane he came out of the temple. On his way back in the motor car the Swami sat motionless and completely indrawn. In the Rangoon Sevashram when requested to narrate his experience at Pegu, he kept silent. But when pressingly solicited, he said, 'Lord Buddha out of his infinite mercy granted a vision to me. I saw the lying image of Buddha pulsating with life. How wonderful was the lustre of His fascinating beauty !'

Swami Vijnanananda had infinite love and respect for Swami Vivekananda, and felt the living presence of the latter in his room at the Belurmath where he lived and died. Vijnanananda had a wonderful experience during his stay at the Belurmath. His room was close to that of Swami Vivekananda. One night he got up for urination and saw that the latter's room was lighted. He thought that the latter had kindled a light to kill bugs or drive the mosquitoes from inside the curtain. After passing urine while he was returning to his room, he peeped into that of his illustrious brother and was astounded to see a supernormal phenomena. There was no material light in the room. Swamiji was seated in deep meditation and his body shone like a luminous object so much that the room was illumined. In meditation the real nature of Swamiji being fully manifest the earthly frame became effulgent. When the monastery was in the garden house of Nilamber Mukherjee, Vijnananandaji on the Dassera day bowed down to the Swamiji and touched his feet with his hands. At that time he received spiritual charge which resembled an electric shock.

The Power of God's Name

By Swami Prabhavananda.

I once met an Indian monk who had achieved illumination by the sole spiritual practice of hallowing God's name. When I was a college student, I visited Brindavan. There I learned about a holy man who lived in a forest nearby, and I decided to go and see him. A narrow path led me to a small hut in the centre of a clearing. Soon the holy man came out of the hut, sat on a mat which his disciple spread on the ground, and motioned me to be seated also. There was a tangible atmosphere of saintliness about him. I prostrated before him. Then I asked, 'Revered Sir, how did you attain this state?' 'Nama', he said, giving me to understand that he had achieved perfection through repetition of the Nama, the Lord's name. He said no more, and I sat before him in silence for a while. At last I bowed down to him and left. My heart was filled with peace.

From, 'The Sermon on the Mount according to Vedanta'.

The Ramakrishna Mission on the reign of terror in East Bengal

From 'The Vedanta Kesari – November 1946'.

We are terribly shocked to read the newspaper reports of harrowing sufferings on a mass scale, in the Noakhali districts and certain parts of Tipperah district, caused by all sorts of barbarous atrocities perpetrated obviously by an organised gang of armed hooligans belonging to a certain community. It is simply unthinkable that murder, loot, arson, abduction and forced conversion and marriage on such a vast scale can go on unchecked for any length of time under a civilised and well-established government of the twentieth century. In the name of helpless suffering people of the orgy-affected areas, we appeal to the authorities concerned to lose no time in bringing to book the lawless elements and stopping their antisocial bestial activities. Any dilatoriness in this regard may easily be misconstrued as apathy or even unwillingness. To the oppressed we are sending succour as far as circumstances permit. We expect that they should defend their hearths and homes, and particularly the honour of their womenfolk, as best as they can, as enjoined by their Scriptures. The duty of the common man is something quite different from that of the man of realisation. Inertia must not be confused with equanimity. Manu, the-great lawgiver of ancient India, advises even killing in self-defence. And Swami Vivekananda, quoting the following passage from the Mahanirvana Tantra : "To his enemies the house-holder must be a hero," commented on it saying, "Them he must resist. This is the duty of the house-holder. He must not sit down in a corner and weep, and talk nonsense about non-resistance. If he does not show himself a hero to his enemies, he has not done his duty." (Karma Yoga, ch. II)

They should also know that forced conversion cannot be a bar to re-entry into their own fold. Religion is a matter of deep-rooted conviction which no external acts of violence can take away. As humble followers of Swami Vivekananda, we firmly believe that the Hindu society is about to shed the last vestiges of exclusiveness in the shape of untouchability, the ban on reconversion, and other social restrictions in the name of religion that no longer have any meaning and are eating into the vitals of a society that was once strong enough to absorb alien races like the Greeks, Scythians and Huns. We need hardly say that abducted women should be taken back into the society with all honour. Failure to do so would mean punishing the victims instead of the aggressor, which is absurd. Society should not make the innocent victim the scapegoat of its own impotence.

Lastly, we assure the oppressed that, after all, the well-being of humanity is in the hands of God and not in those of designing men, however powerful they may seem to be at the moment, as the last World War has proved. It is an unfailing spiritual law of life that evil although it may triumph at the beginning, is bound to be vanquished in the end. May God give courage and strength to the oppressed and rationality and human feelings to the oppressors!

Swami Madhavananda,
General Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission.

Nirvana as per The Buddha

The Buddha achieved Nirvana by his intense tapas, by the exercise of his incisive intellect which, transcending itself, dowered him with an insight into the truth of Reality. He beheld a vision in which was enacted before him the entire drama of life in its unceasing revolutions. What was this vision that he saw? If we may reconstruct it from his teachings, he would have seen the entire universe functioning by an inviolable Law which operates with mechanical perfection and all living beings subject to a succession of lives and deaths, weltering in sorrow and suffering, and yearning for release from this transmigratory process. The root cause of all misery would have been revealed to his gaze as lying in desire and attachment and the only hope of delivery would have appeared to be the cultivation of a habit of desirelessness. He would have seen that nothing did abide in the empirical world, that everything was in a state of unceasing flux and change, that there was nothing that was permanent, that there was not even that which changes, but change alone was the ultimate fact. So impressed would he have been with this fleeting flux that far from bothering about the origin of it all, his one thought would have been to meditate more intensely and discover the way to stop this incessant empirical flow and attain an abiding restfulness and supreme repose. Discovering that desire was the urge for all human activity, so tortuous in its course and so banal in its results, he would have found that the cessation of desire was the only way to cry halt to the cyclic process which enmeshes men further and further in this vale of tears. To that end, he would have seen sketched out before him, the glorious Eightfold Path paved with the pebbles of Dharma and leading to the beatific calm of Nirvana. On that road there would have appeared to him a sedate procession of bhikkus, pilgrims to the Eternal who despised what the world valued and valued what the world despised, while flanking that road stood a crowd of spectators constrained by their flesh and complaining of their woes. At the end of that road, he would have seen a great Light into whose stillness and serenity the pilgrims merged away in that transcendent region. Thuswise must have been the Enlightenment that came to the Awakened One in the fourth watch of that fateful night—an Enlightenment which instantly got embodied in his person whereby he became at once the Wisdom and the Way.

UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Events	Date & Time
Buddha Jayanti	May 11 @ 11am <i>Also Puja will be streamed live on YouTube.</i>
July Retreat 2025 Conducted by Swami Sarvapriyananda, Minister-in-charge Vedanta Society of New York, US	July 6, 2025 @ 9.30am to 2 pm <i>This will be held in-person only for those who register their names in advance</i>
Guru Purnima	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.

RAMNAM: 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.

July Retreat 2025

The Vedanta Society of Toronto will hold a Retreat on **July 6, 2025**.

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

Retreat program: 9.30am to 10.30am – First session **Topic-1 'Beyond the Known and the Unknown'**;
10.30 to 11:15 am – Tea break
11:15 am to 12:15 pm – Second session **Topic-2 'See Brahman in Every Experience'**;
12:15 to 1:15 pm – Question Answer session
1:15 to 2:00 pm – Lunch

All participants are requested to be present at the venue by 9 am.

Venue of the Retreat: **Sindhi Gurmandir**, 207 Queens Plate Drive, Etobicoke, ON M9W 6Z7.

Fees for the Retreat: \$75 per participant.

Registration is first-cum-serve and limited to 200 seats.

All are requested to please follow below steps:

1. Send email to toronto@rkmm.org mentioning full name, you will receive acceptance email from us.
Correspondences on phone or Whatsapp is not recommended and may not be entertained.
2. **Only after receiving acceptance email**, pay (before June 15,2025) @ \$75 per participant. After payment, please email the receipt to toronto@rkmm.org.

Payment mode: Through Vedanta Society of Toronto website PayPal / POS machine in the ashram / cheque issued to Vedanta Society of Toronto mentioning **July Retreat 2025**, to reach us **before June 15,2025**.

Mention in the subject line of your email: July Retreat 2025

****Parking is available on the premises. This Retreat will be held in-person only.**

Vedanta Society of Toronto

Minister and Teacher- Swami Kripamayanda, Ramakrishna Order of India

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> 7:30pm ONLINE only Scripture class 'Uddhava Gita'	<u>3</u>
<u>4</u> 11.00am Lecture: (ONLINE ONLY) 'Building blocks of Inner strength'	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u> 7:30pm Scripture class 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>10</u>
<u>11</u> 11.00am Buddha Jayanti Celebration	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u> 7:30pm Scripture class (ONLINE ONLY) 'Uddhava Gita'	<u>17</u> 6am to 6pm VIGIL
<u>18</u> 11.00am Lecture: (ONLINE ONLY) 'Gautam Buddha-The Enlightened'	<u>19</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u> 7:30pm Scripture class 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>24</u>
<u>25</u> 11.00am Lecture: 'Modern Science, Samkhya and Advaita Vedanta' 5:00pm RAMNAAM	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u> 7:30pm Scripture class 'Uddhava Gita'	

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.