



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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Newsletter September 2025

Words to Inspire

'The Divine Mother is the latent power sleeping in us; without worshipping Her we can never know ourselves. All-merciful, all-powerful, omnipresent are attributes of Divine Mother. She is the sum total of the energy in the universe. Every manifestation of power in the universe is "Mother."' -----Swami Vivekananda

My Master used to say, 'This world is a huge lunatic asylum where all men are mad, some after money, some after women, some after name or fame, and a few after God. I prefer to be mad after God. God is the philosopher's stone that turns us to gold in an instant; the form remains, but the nature is changed—the human form remains, but no more can we hurt or sin. Thinking of God, some weep, some sing, some laugh, some dance, some say wonderful things, but all speak of nothing but God.'

Prophets preach, but the Incarnations like Jesus, Buddha, Ramakrishna can give religion; one glance, one touch is enough. That is the power of the Holy Ghost, the 'laying on of hands' the power was actually transmitted to the disciples by the Master—the 'chain of Guru-power.' That, the real baptism, has been handed down for untold ages. Bhakti cannot be used to fulfil any desires, itself being the check to all desires. Narada gives these as the signs of love: 'When all thoughts, all words, and all deeds are given up unto the Lord, and the least forgetfulness of God makes one intensely miserable, then love has begun. This is the highest form of love because therein is no desire for reciprocity, which desire is in all human love. A man who has gone beyond social and scriptural usage, he is a Sannyasin. When the whole soul goes to God, when we take refuge only in God, then we know that we are about to get this love. Obey the scriptures until you are strong enough to do without them; then go beyond them. Let nothing stand between God and your love for Him. Love Him, love Him, love Him; and let the world say what it will. Love is of three sorts—one demands but gives nothing; the second is exchange; and the third is love without thought of return—love like that of the moth for the light. Love is higher than work, than Yoga, than knowledge. Work is merely a schooling for the doer; it can do no good to others. We must work out our own problem; the prophets only show us how to work. 'What you think, you become,' so if you throw your burden on Jesus, you will have to think of Him and thus become like Him, you love Him. Extreme love and highest

knowledge are one. Day and night think of God and think of nothing else as far as possible. The daily necessary thoughts can all be thought through God. Eat to Him, drink to Him, sleep to Him, see Him in all. Talk of God to others; this is most beneficial.

Get the mercy of God and of His greatest children; these are the two chief ways to God. The presence of those who love God makes a place holy, 'such is the glory of the children of the Lord.' To such lovers there is no distinction of caste, learning, beauty, birth, wealth, or occupation; because all are His. Give up all evil company, especially at the beginning. Avoid worldly company, that will distract your mind. Give up all 'me and mine.' To him who has nothing in the universe the Lord comes. Cut the bondage of all worldly affections; go beyond laziness and all care as to what becomes of you. Never turn back to see the result of what you have done. Give all to the Lord and go on and think not of it. The whole soul pours in a continuous current to God; there is no time to seek money, or name, or fame, no time to think of anything but God; then will come into our hearts that infinite, wonderful bliss of Love. All desires are but beads of glass. Love of God increases every moment and is ever new, to be known only by feeling it. Love is the easiest of all, it waits for no logic, it is natural. We need no demonstration, no proof. Reasoning is limiting something by our own minds. We throw a net and catch something, and then say that we have demonstrated it; but never, never can we catch God in a net.

Love should be unrelated. Even when we love wrongly, it is of the true love, of the true bliss; the power is the same, use it as we may. Its very nature is peace and bliss. The murderer when he kisses his baby forgets for an instant all but love. Give up all self, all egotism; get out of anger, lust, give all to God. 'I am not, but Thou art; the old man is all gone, only Thou remainest.' 'I am Thou.' Blame none; if evil comes, know the Lord is playing with you and be exceeding glad. Love is beyond time and space, it is absolute.

From the book 'Inspired Talks'

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.

Mahisasura Mardini

(From 'Devi Mahatmyam')

Mahisasura became the lord of the asuras. He declared war on the devas led by Indra, the lord of the devas. In that war which lasted 100 years, the army of the devas was vanquished. Then Mahisasura became the lord of heaven. The vanquished devas headed by Brahma, the lord of beings, went to the place where Shiva and Vishnu were present. The devas narrated their story of defeat by the asuras. Mahisasura himself had assumed the jurisdictions of Surya, Indra, Agni, Vayu, Candra, Yama, Varuna and other devas. Hearing the words of the devas, Vishnu and Shiva became very angry and their faces became fierce. Then issued forth a great light from the face of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. From the bodies of Indra and other devas also sprang forth a very great light. All these light rays united together forming a concentrated light like a mountain blazing, pervading all the quarters with its flames. Then that unique light became a female form. By Shiva's light her face came into being; by Yama's light her hair, by Vishnu's light her arms; by Candra's light her two breasts, by Indra's light her waist; by Varuna's light her shanks and Earth's light her hips. By Brahma's light her feet came into being; by Surya's light her toes; by Vasus' light her fingers; by Kubera's light her nose; by Prajapati's light her teeth and by Agni's light her three eyes were formed. The light of the two sandhyas became her eye-brows, the light of Vayu her ears; the manifestation of the lights of the other devas contributed to the being of the auspicious Devi. Then looking at her, who had come into being from the assembled lights of all the devas, the immortals who were oppressed by Mahisasura experienced immense joy.

Shiva (Pinaka) drawing forth a trident from his own trident presented it to the Devi. Vishnu bringing forth a discus from his own discus gave it to her. Varuna gave her a conch, Agni a spear, Maruta gave her a bow and two quivers full of arrows. Indra gave her the thunderbolt and a bell from Airavata. Yama gave her a staff from his own staff of Death, Prajapati gave her a noose and Brahma gave her a string of beads and a water-pot. Surya bestowed his own rays on all pores of her skin and Kala (Time) gave her a sword and a shield. The milk-ocean gave a pure necklace, a pair of undecaying garments, a divine crests-jewel, a pair of earrings, bracelets, a brilliant half-moon, armlets on all arms, a pair of shining anklets, a unique necklace and excellent rings on all the fingers. Vishwakarma gave her a brilliant axe, weapons of various forms and an impenetrable armour. The Ocean gave her a garland of unfading lotuses for her head and hand. The mount Himavat gave her a lion to ride on and various jewels. The lord of wealth Kubera gave her a drinking cup ever full of wine. Sesha, the lord of the serpents gave her a serpent necklace bedecked with jewels. The Devi then gave out a loud roar with a defying laugh. By her exceedingly great terrible roar, the entire sky was filled with great reverberation, which shook the earth and mountains and

caused huge waves in the seas. 'Victory to you', exclaimed the devas in joy. The devas and the sages bowed down to Her and extolled her. The asuras agitated by this roar, mobilized all their armies and rose up together with uplifted weapons. Mahisasura exclaimed, "Ha! What is this?" and rushed towards the roar, surrounded by his generals and their armies. Then he saw the Devi pervading the three worlds (heaven, earth and nether region) with her lustre. Making the earth bend with her footstep, scraping the sky with her diadem, shaking the nether world with the twang of her bow-string, and standing there pervading all the quarters of all the quarter around with her thousand arms.

Then began the great battle between that Devi and the enemies of the devas. Mahisasura's generals, Ciksura and Camara, attended by the cavalry, charioteers, elephant-soldiers and foot-soldiers, fought with the Devi. Other great asuras Udagra, Mahahanu, Asiloman, Baskala, Parivarita, Bidala and others joined the fight with the Devi accompanied with several hundreds of asuras.

The Devi killed all the asura generals and destroyed their armies with all weapons and chariots. The profuse blood from the asuras, elephants and horses flowed like large rivers. Seeing his army thus destroyed by the Devi, Mahisasura himself joined the fight assuming the form of Mahisa (Buffalo). The Mahisa then started destroying the army of devas single-handed with his hooves and horns. Then in huge rage, Mahisasura, pounded the surface of the earth with his hooves, tossed up the high mountains with his horns and bellowed terribly. The earth disintegrated and the sea overflowed all around. He rushed to slay the lion of the Devi, which enraged Candika (another form of the Devi). Candika flung the noose around the Mahisa's neck and cut his neck. Mahisasura then assumed the form of a huge lion. The Devi cut off the asura who again assumed his human form. Then ensued a fierce battle between the asura and Devi. Then the asura assumed the form of an elephant and again attacked the Devi's lion, but as he was dragging the lion, the Devi cut off the elephant's trunk with her sword. Then the asura again assumed the form of a buffalo and attacked the Devi. Enraged Candika quaffed a divine drink, laughed aloud, her eyes becoming red and said, "Roar, roar O fool, for a moment while I drink this wine. When you will be slain by me, the devas will soon roar in this very place." Then Devi jumped and landed herself on that great asura, pressed him on the neck with her foot. Mahisasura half issued forth in his human form from his own buffalo mouth, and the Devi struck him with her spear. This ended Mahisasura and whole of his army at once. Indra and the host of devas, gandharvas and sages bowed before the Devi and chanted, "May Candika, whose incomparable greatness and power Bhagavan Brahma, Bhagavan Vishnu and Bhagavan Shiva are unable to describe, bestow her mind on protecting the entire world and destroy the fear of evil."

How to pray

Here are the differences between our prayers and those of Ramakrishna:

1. We pray to an invisible God, yet Ramakrishna prayed to the visible living Divine Mother and other deities.
2. Most of our prayers come from our lips and not from our hearts. The Master's mind and speech were united, so his prayers originated from the inner recess of his heart.
3. Most of our prayers are directed towards maya, which means that we pray for worldly things. When we suffer, we pray, "God, we want you." Again when we feel better, we pray, "O Lord, we bought a lottery ticket in the name of 'Ma Kali.' May we win the lottery." The Master jokingly said to his rich devotee Jadu Mallick: "I now understand your nature. You are like the stone at Ramjivanpur half-warm and half-cold. You are devoted to God and also to the world." Ramakrishna prayed only for God and not for wealth or powers.
4. Most of our prayers are self-motivated; the Master's prayers were unselfish and for the welfare of others.
5. Our prayers lack devotion, and for that reason God will not fulfill them. We see children force their parents to fulfill their demands because of the parents' love for and dependence on them. When our prayers are not fulfilled quickly, we scold God: "You are dead. Please get a hearing aid." We lose faith and enroll our names on the list of atheists. The soul of prayer is love and faith. Ramakrishna's prayers became living through his love and faith.

Swami Premananda witnessed how Ramakrishna's love and faith vividly manifested during prayer, and he described this to Swami Vishuddhananda. At Varanasi on 21 October 1951, Swami Vishuddhananda reminisced:

One day, Baburam Maharaj [Swami Premananda] arrived at Dakshineswar. The Master was seated on his small cot. Suddenly, out of ecstasy he began to sing:

"If only I can pass away repeating Durga's name, How canst Thou then, O Blessed One, Withhold from me deliverance, wretched though I may be?" While singing that song, his ecstasy went deeper and deeper. Gradually he became excited and left his cot. He stood up, took off his cloth, and began to roll it like a rope. He then tied it around his waist tightly and continued that song. He was mad with ecstasy. Baburam Maharaj remarked: "That day I realized that Faith embodied itself and appeared in Ramakrishna's form."

God in the form of Ramakrishna taught human beings how to pray to God. God is completely free from desires and is the ruler of maya. Does God need to pray for anything?

Repeat, O mind, my Mother Durga's hallowed name!
O Gauri! O Narayani! to Thee I bow.
Thou art the day, O Mother! Thou art the dusk and the night.
As Rama Thou drawest the bow, as Krishna Thou playest the flute;
As Kali all terrible, Thou hast silenced Śiva, Thy Lord.
The ten Embodiments of Divine Sakti art Thou,
And Thou the ten Avatars: this time save me Thou must!
With flowers and vilwa-leaves did Yasoda worship Thee,
And Thou didst bless her by placing Krishna, the Child, in her arms.
Wherever I chance to live, O Mother, in forest or grove,
May my mind, day and night, dwell at Thy Lotus Feet;
Whether at last I die a natural or sudden death,
Oh, may my tongue repeat Durga's name at the end!
Thou mayest send me away, O Mother, but where shall I go?
Tell me, Mother, where else shall I hear so sweet a name?
Thou mayest even say to me: "Step aside! Go away!"
Yet I shall cling to Thee, O Durga! Unto Thy feet
As Thine anklets I shall cling, making their tinkling sound.
When, O Mother, Thou sittest at mighty Śiva's side,
Then I shall cry from Thy feet, "Victory unto Śiva!"
Mother, when as the Kite Thou soarest in the sky,
There, in the water beneath, as a minnow I shall be swimming;
Upon me Thou wilt pounce, and pierce me through with Thy claws.
Thus, when the breath of life forsakes me in Thy grip,
Do not deny me the shelter of Thy Lotus Feet!
From the world's bondage free me, O Spouse of the Absolute!
Thy two feet are my boat to cross this world's dark sea.
Thou art the heavens and the earth, and Thou the nether world;
From Thee have the twelve Gopas and Hari and Brahma sprung.
Whoever treads the path, repeating "Durga! Durga!"
Śiva Himself protects with His almighty trident.

From, 'The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna', Ch: The Durga Puja Festival.

Durga Puja at Belur Math



Durga Puja was first celebrated at Belur Math in 1901. Since then Durga Puja has been celebrated at Belur Math year after year, although for a few years after the first celebration in 1901, Pratima worship was not done. (In this connection it should be mentioned that Durga Puja was conducted on a small scale, without the image, by the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna during the early years of Ramakrishna Math at Baranagar.) It was Swami Vivekananda himself who started the first Durga Puja with the image at Belur Math. As a rule, Hindu Sannyasins do not conduct this kind of ritualistic worship. Why then did Swamiji start the new tradition?

One reason was to gain the acceptance of the local community for the new way of life that Swamiji and his monastic brothers were leading. The Hindu society in Calcutta had not fully accepted Swamiji's going to the West, and the rather unconventional ways of life at Belur Math which included disregard for caste rules and mixing with Western people. As a matter of fact, the celebration of Durga Puja

helped to remove much of the misunderstanding and misgivings about the new monastic institution among the local people. Another reason was Swamiji wanted to institutionalize respect for divinity of motherhood and sanctity of womanhood. Swamiji saw that one of the main reasons for the advancement of Western people was the elevation of women in the West, and one of the main reasons for the backwardness of India was the neglect of women in this country. Worship of the Divine Mother, especially the Kumari Puja, would create the awareness of the potential divinity of women and a respectful attitude towards them.

A third reason was supernatural. A few days before Durga Puja in 1901, Swamiji had a vision of Durga Puja being done at Belur Math. More or less at that time, Swami Brahmanandaji saw in a vision Mother Durga coming across the Ganga from Dakshineswar to Belur Math. Swamiji asked Raja Maharaj to make preparations for Durga Puja immediately, although only a few days were left to begin the Puja.

The main problem was to get a clay image for worship. Enquiries at Kamartuli (the street in Kolkata where artisans make clay images) revealed that there was a single beautiful image of Durga in a shop. The person who had ordered it had not turned up, and so the artisan agreed to sell it to the monks.

Apart from the image, a lot of other things had to be collected for the elaborate ritualistic worship. Under able direction of Swami Brahmanandaji everything was done well at short notice.

The first Durga Puja at Belur Math was conducted in a huge Pandal (decorative shed) on the open ground to the north of the old shrine. The invocatory worship on Shashthi (the 6th day of the lunar month) was on 18 October 1901. The Pujari was Brahmachari Krishnalal and the Tantradharak was Isvar Chandra Chakravarty, the father of Shashi Maharaj. Sitting under the Bel tree (which now stands in front of his temple) Swamiji sang Agamani songs welcoming the Divine Mother.

The householder disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and orthodox Brahmins of nearby area had been specially invited, and thousands of people, irrespective of the distinctions of caste or religion, attended the three-day festival. On the night of Navami Swamiji sang many songs in praise of Divine Mother, some of which used to be sung by Sri Ramakrishna.

Holy Mother and Durga Puja

When Swamiji decided to celebrate Durga Puja at Belur Math, one of the first things he did was to seek the approval of Holy Mother Sarada Devi who was then staying at Baghbazar in Kolkata. Swami Premananda went to Mother, and Mother whole-heartedly approved the proposal. On Shashthi day She came with other women devotees and stayed at Nilambar Babu's garden house nearby. Mother attended the awakening ceremony that day and attended the Puja on all the three subsequent days. Since Sannyasins cannot undertake this kind of ritualistic worship, Swamiji decreed that the Puja should be done in the name of Holy Mother. This became a tradition which continues to this day. Swamiji looked upon Sri Sarada Devi as the divine counterpart of Sri Ramakrishna, born for the awakening of womankind in the modern world. In a letter to Swami Shivananda written in 1894 from America, Swamiji had given expression to his conviction about the Divinity of Holy Mother as follows: "Brother, I shall show how to worship the living Durga (Jivanta Durga), and then only shall I be worthy of my name. I shall be relieved when you have purchased a plot of land and established there the living Durga, the Mother (i.e. Sri Sarada Devi)." The presence of Holy Mother, the Living Durga, during the Puja must have given boundless joy and satisfaction to Swamiji and the other disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.

Holy Mother attended the Durga Puja at Belur Math in 1912 and in 1916 and perhaps in some other years also. Each time Mother stayed for a few days and blessed Her monastic and lay children.

UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Events	Date & Time
Sri Krishna Janmashtami	August 16 @ 6.30pm <i>Also Puja will be streamed live on YouTube.</i>
Annual Seminar <i>Monastic speaker: Mataji Pravrajika Virajaprana, a senior nun from Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco US</i>	September 6, 2025 9am to 4pm. <i>On-site only, this will not be streamed on YouTube.</i>
<u>Durga Puja celebration</u> Maha Ashtami Maha Navami Vijaya Dashami	Tuesday September 30 @ 6.30pm Wednesday October 1 @ 6.30pm Thursday October 2 @ 6.30pm (Puja from 6.30 pm; Pushpanjali and prasad at 8.30 pm) <i>Also Puja will be streamed live on YouTube.</i>
Kali puja	October 20 @ 6.30pm <i>Also Puja will be streamed live on YouTube.</i>

REGULAR PROGRAMMES

SCRIPTURE CLASS: Friday Scripture Classes begin at 7:30 pm, following the regular evening prayer at 6:00 pm. The class, held at the centre, is open to all interested persons. For details, please see the 'Calendar of Events' on the next page.

VIGIL: A vigil consisting of japa and meditation will be observed, from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm, for date kindly see 'Calendar of Events', on next page. To participate, please call the centre @416-240-7262.

RAM NAM: For the date and time of the monthly Ramnam, please see the 'Calendar of Events' on the next page.

BOOK STORE: Limited number of books are available for purchase.

DAILY BREAD FOOD BANK: Daily Bread Food Bank has actively started. We would like to encourage people to donate.

INTERVIEWS/INSTRUCTION:

Swami Kripamayananda will be happy to give Interviews to those interested in knowing more about Vedanta and meditation. Individual interviews are also given for Spiritual instructions. Appointments for interviews should be made in advance with the Swami at 416-240-7262.

DAILY MEDITATION: Meditation is done at the Centre every morning from 6:00 am to 7:00 am. Devotional singing and meditation time in the evenings is from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm.

SOUP KITCHEN: Please see next page for details.

ANNUAL SEMINAR 2025

The Vedanta Society will hold its Annual Seminar, details as mentioned below.

Date: September 6, 2025, 9am to 4pm (Breakfast: 8.30 to 9am)

Topic: 'Your Infinite Potential'

Registration fee (includes breakfast and lunch): \$75 per person. (Students: \$20)

Distinguished Speakers:

- **Monastic speaker:** Mataji Pravrajika Virajaprana, a senior nun from Vedanta Society of Northern California, US

Other Speakers will be announced near the date of Seminar. Please check the website close to seminar date for details.

The Seminar will encourage the active participation of all attendees, and to help them move forward in their spiritual life.

Participants are requested to email confirmation to toronto@rkmm.org by **August 31, 2025**, mentioning their name. Payment can be made on the day of the Seminar by cash, cheque or by credit / debit cards.

The seminar will be in-person only, this will not be streamed online.

Parking may be available in the adjacent school parking lot.

Vedanta Society of Toronto

Minister and Teacher- Swami Kripamayananda, Ramakrishna Order of India

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u> 9am to 4pm <i>Seminar with Pravrajika Virajaprana as the monastic speaker</i>
<u>7</u> 11.00am Lecture: 'Holy Mother's Simple Path to God' By Pr. Virajaprana 5:00pm RAMNAAM	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u> 7:30pm Scripture class 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>13</u>
<u>14</u> 11.00am Lecture (ONLINE ONLY): 'Bhakti-Love for God'	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u> 7:30pm Scripture class 'Uddhava Gita'	<u>20</u> 6am to 6pm VIGIL
<u>21</u> 11.00am Lecture (ONLINE ONLY): 'The Ultimate Reality-Personal and Impersonal'	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u> 7:30pm Scripture class 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>27</u>
<u>28</u> 11.00am Lecture: 'Guided Meditation'	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u> 6.30PM Durga puja - Maha Ashtami				

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 2025 & DONATION

Vedanta Society appeals to the devotees and well-wishers to kindly come forward and donate generously through online means. Our thanks to those who have responded to our appeal and kindly donated to support the Society. With the current scenario, devotees and well-wishers can donate online through our website PayPal link <https://vedantatoronto.ca/donate> using Credit / Debit cards. Through PayPal you can also setup recurring monthly donations.

All members who have not renewed their membership for the year 2025, are requested to send their details by email to toronto@rkmm.org i.e. Name, Address, Mobile - Home phone numbers, email address and amount paid. Please pay the annual subscription through our website PayPal link as mentioned above. This will help us to issue the annual tax receipt.