



# Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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## Newsletter February 2023

### Words to Inspire

"My Master's message to mankind is: "Be spiritual and realise truth for Yourself." To proclaim and make clear the fundamental unity underlying all religions was the mission of my Master. Other teachers have taught special religions which bear their names, but this great teacher of the nineteenth century made no claim for himself. He left every religion undisturbed because he had realised that in reality they are all part and parcel of the one eternal religion."

-----Swami Vivekananda

### **My Master**

*(Two lectures delivered in New York and England in 1896 by Swami Vivekananda)*

This man came to live near Calcutta, the capital of India, the most important university town in our country which was sending out sceptics and materialists by the hundreds every year. Yet many of these university men — sceptics and agnostics — used to come and listen to him. I heard of this man, and I went to hear him. He looked just like an ordinary man, with nothing remarkable about him. He used the most simple language, and I thought "Can this man be a great teacher?"— crept near to him and asked him the question which I had been asking others all my life: "Do you believe in God, Sir?" "Yes," he replied. "Can you prove it, Sir?" "Yes." "How?" "Because I see Him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense." That impressed me at once. For the first time I found a man who dared to say that he saw God that religion was a reality to be felt, to be sensed in an infinitely more intense way than we can sense the world. I began to go to that man, day after day, and I actually saw that religion could be given. One touch, one glance, can change a whole life. My Master used to say, "Religion can be given and taken more tangibly, more really than anything else in the world." Be therefore spiritual first; have something to give and then stand before the world and give it. Religion does not consist in erecting temples, or building churches, or attending public worship. It is not to be found in books, or in words, or in lectures, or in organisations. Religion consists in realisation.

The first ideal of this attempt to realise religion is that of renunciation. As far as we can, we must give up. Darkness and light, enjoyment of the world and enjoyment of God will never go together. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Let people try it if they will, and I have seen millions in every country who have tried; but after all, it comes to nothing. If one word remains true in the saying, it is, give up every thing for the sake of the Lord. This is a hard and long task, but you can begin it here and now. Bit by bit we must go towards it. The second idea that I learnt from my Master, and which is

perhaps the most vital, is the wonderful truth that the religions of the world are not contradictory or antagonistic. They are but various phases of one eternal religion. That one eternal religion is applied to different planes of existence, is applied to the opinions of various minds and various races. There never was my religion or yours, my national religion or your national religion; there never existed many religions, there is only the one. One infinite religion existed all through eternity and will ever exist, and this religion is expressing itself in various countries in various ways. Therefore, we must respect all religions and we must try to accept them all as far as we can.

In the presence of my Master, I found out that man could be perfect, even in this body. Those lips never cursed anyone, never even criticized anyone. Those eyes were beyond the possibility of seeing evil, that mind had lost the power of thinking evil. He saw nothing but good. That tremendous purity, that tremendous renunciation is the one secret of spirituality. So men came in crowds to hear him, and he would talk twenty hours in the twenty-four, and that not for one day, but for months and months until at last the body broke down under the pressure of this tremendous strain. Gradually, there developed a vital throat disorder and yet he could not be persuaded to refrain from these exertions. There was no rest for him. Many of the people came from long distances, and he would not rest until he had answered their questions. "While I can speak, I must teach them," he would say, and he was as good as his word. One day, he told us that he would lay down the body that day, and repeating the most sacred word of the Vedas he entered into Samâdhi and passed away. Today the name of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa is known all over India to its millions of people. Nay, the power of that man has spread beyond India; and if there has ever been a word of truth, a word of spirituality, that I have spoken anywhere in the world, I owe it to my Master; only the mistakes are mine.

### **KARMA YOGA ACTIVITIES**

It is a great opportunity to provide your services to the Vedanta Society of Toronto. Kindly come forward and volunteer time towards maintaining and managing the facilities. If interested in volunteering, kindly 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!!**

## Who is Ramakrishna

**Holy Mother:** When Sri Ramakrishna was gravely ill at the Cossipore garden house, Holy Mother was stricken with grief. One day she had a vision: A black girl with long hair appeared and sat near her. Realizing that it was Mother Kali, she exclaimed: "Oh, you have come!" "Yes, I have come from Dakshineswar." After further conversation, Holy Mother observed that the girl's neck was bent to one side. She asked: "What has happened to your neck?" Mother Kali: "Well, I have a sore throat." Holy Mother: "My goodness! The Master has a sore throat and you also have it?" Mother Kali: "That is true." Thus, Holy Mother was made to understand that the Divine Mother and Sri Ramakrishna were one and the same.

**Swami Vivekananda:** "According to one's own capacity, one has understood Sri Ramakrishna. Some are saying that Sri Ramakrishna was a Tantrik (monk), some that he was Sri Chaitanya born on earth to preach Naradiya bhakti; some again that to undertake spiritual practices as opposed to faith in him as an avatar; while some are opining that it is not agreeable to his teachings to take to sannyasa. You will hear such words from the householder devotees, but I do not listen to such one-sided estimates. He was the concentrated embodiment of how many previous avatars! Even spending the whole life in religious austerity, we could not understand it. Therefore one has to speak about him with caution and restraint. He bestowed spirituality according to the capacity of each individual. If one realizes a spray from the ocean of his spirituality, one instantly becomes a god. Such a synthesis of universal ideas you will not find in the history of the world again. Understand from this who was born in the person of Sri Ramakrishna."

**Swami Adbhutananda:** "After the Master's passing away, sometimes we would talk about the Master's transcendent love. If one person said, 'The Master loved me the most,' another would at once contradict him and say, 'No, he loved me the most. One day during such a discussion I told them: 'The Master did not leave any property behind and still your squabbling seems unending. The Lord alone knows whether you would have gone to court if he had left us any property.' There was an outburst of laughter at my remark." Among the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, some were iswarakotis, some were nityamuktas or ever-free souls, and some were companions of previous avatars. They understood more or less that their guru was God in human form, a great soul, or their very own. Someone asked Swami Adbhutananda, "Swami, did you feel that the Master was God?" He replied: "Is it possible to serve him or live near him if one feels that he is God? I would think of him as my own father....It is Swamiji who said that the Master was an avatar. What more shall say? He is my guru, my father. How can I know or understand him?"

**Swami Saradananda** wrote the comprehensive biography of Sri Ramakrishna. Towards the end of his life he said: "When I began to write the Lilaprasanga I thought I understood the Master. But now I clearly see that the life of the Master is very deep. I was merely hovering over the top branches; the root is far beneath the ground."

**Mahendranath Gupta: M.** established such a firm relationship with the Master that his mind was absorbed

forever in Ramakrishna. M. said: "Previously I would think that the Master was my very own. My goodness! The more I thought of him, the more I found that he was infinite! When he associated with us, he became truly like one of our own, like father and mother. After a while that relationship would disappear and he would become the infinite, limitless consciousness knowledge, love, peace, and bliss!

**Swami Turiyananda:** Sri Ramakrishna's philosophy therefore is: In whatever way and at any cost we must attain God. The Master said, Tie the nondual knowledge in the corner of your cloth and then do as you please. This means: Once you attain him, it does not matter which doctrine your temperament bids you to uphold. Liberation is assured when you know him. Those who profess to be the children of Sri Ramakrishna must have yoga, bhakti, karma, jnana, nay, everything. For, Sri Ramakrishna stands for the synthesis and harmony of all religious paths. The spiritual growth of a person following a particular line was the rule in the past. But now one should have an all-round development combined with magnanimity of heart to love others."

**Swami Akhandananda:** Our Master is living and moving in all as Narayana [God]. The seed of this Religion of Service was in him. Therefore you now see the tree and its branches. At Deoghar he said to Mathur Babu: 'Feed these poor people, give them clothing and oil [for anointing their heads in the scorching heat], or else I will not proceed to Varanasi [for pilgrimage].' That is how the wheel of this Religion of Service for this age started rolling."

**Swami Advaitananda:** The Master has shown me that it is he who is manifested through all. Then who is there to blame or whom to criticize?" After this experience Advaitananda ceased finding fault with anyone, however great might be the latter's errors.

**Swami Vijnanananda:** Sri Ramakrishna came to demonstrate the harmony of religions. Once the Master told me, pointing to his own picture: "Look I dwell in this picture. Meditate on me." "Yes, I will," I told him. All the forms of gods and goddesses are within Sri Ramakrishna's form. His photograph symbolizes the piercing of the six centres of kundalini. When I look at his luminous form, it seems to me that the Master is immersed in the blissful ocean of Satchidananda transcending the six centres of the kundalini. I see many wonderful things in the Master's picture.

**Swami Subodhananda:** "The Master told me about himself. This body is a cage of flesh and bones, but the Mother is playing inside it.... He who was Rama and Krishna is living in this body."

**Swami Trigunatitananda:** "All the prophets, sages, and incarnations of God are nothing else but messengers to bring the message from Heaven. Ramakrishna could explain beautifully that there is or can be not one messenger only, not one path only, not one incarnation of God, but many, so that the different types of minds could be satisfied."

**Girish Ghosh:** On January 1, 1886, he felt better and came down to the garden for a little stroll. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon. Some thirty lay disciples were in the hall or sitting about under the trees. Sri Ramakrishna said to Girish,

"Well, Girish, what have you seen in me, that you proclaim me before everybody as an Incarnation of God?" Girish was not the man to be taken by surprise. He knelt before the Master and said, with folded hands, "What can an insignificant person like myself say about the One whose glory even sages like Vyasa and Valmiki could not adequately measure?" The Master was profoundly moved. He said: "What more shall I say? I bless you all. Be illumined!"

**Keshab Chandra Sen:** Keshab (to the Master): "How long will you hide yourself in this way? I dare say people will be thronging here by and by in great crowds."

Master: "What are you talking of? I only eat and drink and sing God's name. I know nothing about gathering crowds."

Keshab: "All right, sir, I shall gather the crowd. But they all must come to your place." Master: "I am the dust of everybody's feet. If anyone is gracious enough to come here,

he is welcome." Keshab: "Whatever you may say, sir, your advent cannot be in vain."

Keshab understood the Master's greatness and his divinity. He began to write about the Master's life and teachings in the Brahma journals- Sulabh Samachar, Sunday Mirror, and Theistic Quarterly Review. Many people of Calcutta, and especially the Young Bengal, began to visit the Master as a result.

Towards the end of his life, Keshab worshipped the Master as God. M. wrote: "The Master told us: 'One day I went to Keshab's house. He requested me to go with him into his private shrine. He said: 'I worship God in that shrine. Please come and sanctify it.' As soon as I entered the room, he closed the door and began to worship my feet with flowers and sandal paste.

## **The Teacher of Spirituality**

From the "*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda – Vol.4, Addresses on Bhakti*".

Every soul is destined to be perfect, and every being, in the end, will attain to that state. That soul from which this impulse comes is called the Guru, the teacher; and the soul to which the impulse is conveyed is called the disciple, the student. In order to convey this impulse, in the first place, the soul from which it comes must possess the power of transmitting it, as it were, to another; and in the second place, the object to which it is transmitted must be fit to receive it. The seed must be a living seed, and the field must be ready ploughed; and when both these conditions are fulfilled, a wonderful growth of religion takes place. "The seeking sinner meeteth the seeking Saviour." When the power that attracts in the receiving soul is full and ripe, the power which answers to that attraction must come.

In the teacher we must first see that he knows the secret of the scriptures. Those who deal too much in words and let the mind run always in the force of words lose the spirit. So the teacher must be able to know the spirit of the scriptures. As my Master used to say, what would you think of men who went into a mango orchard and busied themselves in counting the leaves and examining the colour of the leaves, the size of the twigs, the number of branches, and so forth, while only one of them had the sense to begin to eat the mangoes? So leave this counting of leaves and twigs and this note-taking to others. That work has its own value in its proper place, but not here in the spiritual realm.

The second condition necessary in the teacher is that he must be sinless. In the spiritual sciences it is impossible from first to last that there can be any spiritual light in that soul which is impure. What can such a soul teach? It knows nothing. Spiritual truth is purity. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God". In that one sentence is the gist of all religions. If you have learnt that, all that has been said in the past and all that it is possible to say in the future, you have known; you need not look into anything else, for you have all that is necessary in that one sentence; it could save the world, were all the other scriptures lost. A vision of God, a glimpse of the beyond never comes until the soul is pure. Therefore in the teacher of spirituality, purity is the one thing indispensable; we must see first what he is, and then what he says.

The third condition is motive. We should see that he does not teach with any ulterior motive, for name, or fame, or anything else, but simply for love, pure love for you. When spiritual forces are transmitted from the teacher to the taught, they can only be conveyed through the medium of love; there is no other medium that can convey them. Any other motive, such as gain or name, would immediately destroy the conveying medium; therefore all must be done through love. One who has known God can alone be a teacher. When you see that in the teacher these conditions are fulfilled, you are safe; if they are not fulfilled, it is unwise to accept him. There is nothing higher and holier than the knowledge which comes to the soul transmitted by a spiritual teacher.

## **Scholarship for Sanskrit As a Foreign Language (SAFL) course**

Vedanta Vidya Mandir(VVM) of the Vedanta Society of Toronto has initiated a scholarship to attend SAFL (Sanskrit as a Foreign Language) online summer camp and academic year program for high school students. This scholarship is awarded based on the excellence of their performance in the Sanskrit class in VVM.

VVM is happy to announce that the first winner of this scholarship is Dana Singarajah who received a 100% mark in this year's VVM Sanskrit program. Dana said, "VVM taught me moral and ethical values, but from a spiritual perspective, which is something I was not taught in school. It improved my self-confidence and responsibility."

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**113<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION**

The 113<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at Belur Math on Sunday, the 18th of Dec 2022, at 3.30 p.m., in which, Swami Suvirananda, General Secretary of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission presented the 'Report of the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission on the working of the association during FY 2021-22'. A synopsis of the report is given hereunder:

**1) Awards & Recognitions:**

- National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) awarded A++ grade to its Belur Vidyamandira Residential College (West Bengal) and A+ grade to its Narendrapur Residential College (West Bengal) both for five years.
- Four degree colleges of Ramakrishna Mission secured distinguished positions in the India Rankings 2021 announced by the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), Ministry of Education, Government of India: Belur Vidyamandira Residential College (West Bengal) – 5th rank; Rahara Vivekananda Centenary College (West Bengal) – 15th rank; Narendrapur Residential College (West Bengal) – 21st rank; and Coimbatore College of Arts & Science (Tamil Nadu) – 48th rank.
- The higher secondary school at Viveknagar, Agartala (Tripura) was certified as a 'Cyber Smart School' by the NITI Aayog, Govt. of India.

**2) New Branch Centres:**

- New branch centres of the Ramakrishna Mission were started in West Bengal (Krishnanagar, Nabadwip and Somsar) and in Assam (Digboi).
- New branch centres of the Ramakrishna Math were started in Gujarat (Ahmedabad), in Karnataka (Madihalli) and in Tamil Nadu (Thanjavur).

**3) Activities in India:**

The Ramakrishna Mission and the Ramakrishna Math, through their 216 Indian branch centres and sub-centres, spent Rs.943.18 crore towards various services as per the following details:

Name of the Sector	Number of beneficiaries in lakhs	Amount spent in Rupees (Crore)
Relief & Rehabilitation	15.95	26.20
General Welfare	24.77	27.62
Medical	57.09	337.75
Educational	2.61	451.44
Rural Development	29.80	87.16
Publication of literature		13.01
<b>Total</b>		<b>943.18</b>

**4) Activities outside India:**

- An affiliate of Ramakrishna Math was started in Auckland, New Zealand.
- The Ramakrishna Mission and the Ramakrishna Math, through their 97 affiliates and sub-affiliates situated in 24 countries outside India, engaged in preaching the philosophy of Vedanta and in rendering multifarious service activities.

We take this opportunity to thank our members, well-wishers and devotees for their invaluable support and cooperation in carrying forward the service programmes of the Ramakrishna Mission and Ramakrishna Math.



18 December 2022

*Suvirananda*  
(Swami Suvirananda)  
General Secretary

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission

## UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Events	Date & Time
<b>Maha Shivaratri</b>	<b>February 18, 2023</b> – 6.30 pm <i>Puja will be streamed live on YouTube.</i>
<b>Birthday celebration of Sri Ramakrishna</b>	<b>February 26, 2023</b> – 11.00 am <i>Puja will be streamed live on YouTube.</i>
<b>Sri Ram Navami</b>	<b>March 30, 2023</b> – 6:30 pm <i>Puja will be streamed live on YouTube.</i>
<b>Buddha Jayanti</b>	<b>May 5, 2023</b> – 6:30 pm <i>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:** For details on Soup Kitchen, please see the 'Calendar of Events' on the next page for details.

### I am the Atman

From the book, 'Atman Alone Abides', by Swami Atulananda

March 2, 1958

Gurudas Maharaj: Once an abbot was approached by a monk who had something to tell him. The abbot said, "Wait in your cell. I will come to you. Now I am busy." The monk waited and waited, but the abbot did not come; he simply forgot. When the other brothers told the abbot about the monk, he called the monk and said, "Brother, you may be a good monk, but not a great monk; for it ought to have occurred to you that I had forgotten." So you see, along with implicit obedience, discrimination also must be present.

Two Sadhus were wading across a river. A helpless girl also was there. She dared not try to cross. So one Sadhu carried her over and then went on his way. The second Sadhu rebuked the first. "O! you have touched a girl; being a Sadhu, that was not good." The first Sadhu replied, "True, Brother, I did carry her across the river and there I put her down. But you are still carrying her in your mind." You see, despite abstinence, desire--taste--remains.

As the Bhagavad-Gita says (Ch. 2 verse 59), "The objects of desire keep away from a man who does not contact them, but not the hankering for them. Even this hankering goes when the vision of the Supreme is obtained."

So, I come back to my old belief: "I am the Atman." In that, all problems get solved. To get rid of sex thoughts, higher ideas must be cultivated. Sex urges can be controlled or subdued but cannot be done away with. They can be eliminated only by realization of the Supreme. The idea "I am the Supreme" has to be made stronger and stronger. Stronger motives can displace weaker ones. Look at D. He was such a smoker; nothing in the world could make him stop. Then came the fear of getting cancer and he gave up smoking once and for all.

# Vedanta Society of Toronto

Minister and Teacher- Swami Kripamayananda, Ramakrishna Order of India

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### February 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u> <b>7:30pm</b> Online Scripture class: 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>4</u>
<u>5</u> <b>11:00am</b> <b>Lecture:</b> (Online and In person): 'Swami Adbhutananda: A Saga of Guru Seva'	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u> <b>7:30pm</b> Scripture class 'Uddhava Gita'	<u>11</u> <b>6 am to 6 pm</b> <b>VIGIL</b>
<u>12</u> <b>11:00am</b> <b>Lecture:</b> (Online only) 'Universal Form of God: The Viswarupa Darshana in the Bhagavad Gita'	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u> <b>7:30pm</b> Online Scripture class: 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>18</u> <b>6.30pm</b> <b>Maha Shivaratri</b>
<u>19</u> <b>11:00am</b> <b>Lecture:</b> (Online and In person): 'Shiva, The Redeemer'  <b>5:00pm</b> <b>RAMNAM</b>	<u>20</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u> <b>7:30pm</b> Scripture class 'Uddhava Gita'	<u>25</u>
<u>26</u> <b>11:00am</b> <b>Birthday Celebration</b> <b>of Sri Ramakrishna</b>	<u>27</u> <b>WINTER</b> <b>VACATION</b> <b>BEGINS</b>	<u>28</u>				

### **Winter Vacation- February 27 to March 31, 2023**

The Vedanta Society will have its winter vacation from February 27 until March 31, 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 2023.

### **AN APPEAL FOR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL (Year 2023) & 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 <http://newsite.vedantatoronto.ca/donate.shtml> using Credit / Debit cards. Through PayPal you could also setup recurring monthly donations.

All members who have not renewed their membership for the year 2023, are requested to send their details by email to [toronto@rkmm.org](mailto: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.