



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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Newsletter May 2022

Words to Inspire

"Behold, O monks, this is my last advice to you. All compounded things in the world are changeable. They are not lasting. Work hard to gain your own salvation."
-----Buddha

Buddhism, the fulfilment of Hinduism

Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda.. 26th September, 1893

The relation between Hinduism (by Hinduism, I mean the religion of the Vedas) and what is called Buddhism at the present day is nearly the same as between Judaism and Christianity. Jesus Christ was a Jew, and Shâkya Muni was a Hindu. The Jews rejected Jesus Christ, nay, crucified him, and the Hindus have accepted Shâkya Muni as God and worship him. But the real difference that we Hindus want to show between modern Buddhism and what we should understand as the teachings of Lord Buddha lies principally in this: Shâkya Muni came to preach nothing new. He also, like Jesus, came to fulfil and not to destroy. Only, in the case of Jesus, it was the old people, the Jews, who did not understand him, while in the case of Buddha, it was his own followers who did not realise the import of his teachings. As the Jew did not understand the fulfilment of the Old Testament, so the Buddhist did not understand the fulfilment of the truths of the Hindu religion. Again, I repeat, Shâkya Muni came not to destroy, but he was the fulfilment, the logical conclusion, the logical development of the religion of the Hindus.

The religion of the Hindus is divided into two parts: the ceremonial and the spiritual. The spiritual portion is specially studied by the monks. In that there is no caste. A man from the highest caste and a man from the lowest may become a monk in India, and the two castes become equal. In religion there is no caste; caste is simply a social institution. Shâkya Muni himself was a monk, and it was his glory that he had the large-heartedness to bring out the truths from the hidden Vedas and through them broadcast all over the world. He was the first being in the world who brought missionarising into practice — nay, he was the first to conceive the idea of proselytizing.

The great glory of the Master lay in his wonderful sympathy for everybody, especially for the ignorant and the poor. Some of his disciples were Brahmins. When Buddha was teaching, Sanskrit was no more the spoken language in India. It was then only in the books of the learned. Some of Buddha's Brahmins disciples wanted to translate his teachings into

Sanskrit, but he distinctly told them, "I am for the poor, for the people; let me speak in the tongue of the people." And so to this day the great bulk of his teachings are in the vernacular of that day in India.

Whatever may be the position of philosophy, whatever may be the position of metaphysics, so long as there is such a thing as death in the world, so long as there is such a thing as weakness in the human heart, so long as there is a cry going out of the heart of man in his very weakness, there shall be a faith in God.

On the philosophic side the disciples of the Great Master dashed themselves against the eternal rocks of the Vedas and could not crush them, and on the other side they took away from the nation that eternal God to which every one, man or woman, clings so fondly. And the result was that Buddhism had to die a natural death in India. At the present day there is not one who calls oneself a Buddhist in India, the land of its birth. But at the same time, Brahminism lost something — that reforming zeal, that wonderful sympathy and charity for everybody, that wonderful heaven which Buddhism had brought to the masses and which had rendered Indian society so great that a Greek historian who wrote about India of that time was led to say that no Hindu was known to tell an untruth and no Hindu woman was known to be unchaste. Hinduism cannot live without Buddhism, nor Buddhism without Hinduism. Then realize 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. This separation between the Buddhists and the Brahmins is the cause of the downfall of India. That is why India is populated by three hundred millions of beggars, and that is why India has been the slave of conquerors for the last thousand years. Let us then join the wonderful intellect of the Brahmins with the heart, the noble soul, the wonderful humanizing power of the Great Master.

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!!

Buddha - the Divine Being

Siddhartha Gautama's Birth and Family

The future Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, was born in the fifth or sixth century B.C. in Lumbini (in modern-day Nepal). Siddhartha is a Sanskrit name meaning "one who has accomplished a goal", and Gautama is a family name.

His father, King Suddhodana, was the leader of a large clan called the Shakya (or Sakya). It's not clear from the earliest texts whether he was a hereditary king or more of a tribal chief. It is also possible that he was elected to this status.

Suddhodana married two sisters, Maya and Pajapati Gotami. They are said to have been princesses of another clan, the Koliya, from what is northern India today. Maya was the mother of Siddhartha, and he was her only child. She died shortly after his birth. Pajapati, who later became the first Buddhist nun, raised Siddhartha as her own.

By all accounts, Prince Siddhartha and his family were of the Kshatriya caste of warriors and nobles. Among Siddhartha's more well-known relatives was his cousin Ananda, the son of his father's brother. Ananda would later become the Buddha's disciple and personal attendant. He would have been considerably younger than Siddhartha, however, and they didn't know each other as children.

The Prophecy and a Young Marriage

When Prince Siddhartha was a few days old, it is said, a holy man prophesied over the prince. By some accounts, nine Brahman holy men made the prophecy. It was foretold that the boy would be either a great ruler or a great spiritual teacher. King Suddhodana preferred the first outcome and prepared his son accordingly. He raised the boy in great luxury and shielded him from knowledge of religion and human suffering. At the age of 16, he was married to his cousin, Yasodhara, who was also 16. This was no doubt a marriage arranged by the families, as was customary at the time. Yasodhara was the daughter of a Koliya chief, and her mother was a sister to King Suddhodana. She was also a sister of Devadatta, who became a disciple of the Buddha and then, by some accounts, a dangerous rival.

The Four Passing Sights

The prince reached the age of 29 with little experience of the world outside the walls of his opulent palaces. He was oblivious to the realities of sickness, old age, and death.

One day, overcome with curiosity, Prince Siddhartha asked a charioteer to take him on a series of rides through the countryside. On these journeys he was shocked by the sight of an aged man, then a sick man, and then a corpse. The stark realities of old age, disease, and death seized and sickened the prince. Finally, he saw a wandering ascetic. The charioteer explained that the ascetic was one who had renounced the world and sought release from the fear of death and suffering. These life-changing encounters would become known in Buddhism as the Four Passing Sights.

Siddhartha's Renunciation

For a time, the prince returned to palace life, but he took no pleasure in it. Even the news that his wife Yasodhara had

given birth to a son did not please him. The child was called Rahula, which means "fetter."

One night the prince wandered the palace alone. The luxuries that had once pleased him now seemed grotesque. Musicians and dancing girls had fallen asleep and were sprawled about, snoring and sputtering. Prince Siddhartha reflected on the old age, disease, and death that would overtake them all and turn their bodies to dust. He realized then that he could no longer be content living the life of a prince. That very night he left the palace, shaved his head, and changed from his royal clothes into a beggar's robe. Renouncing all the luxury he had known; he began his quest for enlightenment.

The Search Begins

Siddhartha started by seeking out renowned teachers. They taught him about the many religious philosophies of his day as well as how to meditate. After he had learned all they had to teach, his doubts and questions remained. He and five disciples left to find enlightenment by themselves. The six companions attempted to find release from suffering through physical discipline: enduring pain, holding their breath, and fasting nearly to starvation. Yet Siddhartha was still unsatisfied. It occurred to him that in renouncing pleasure he had grasped the opposite of pleasure, which was pain and self-mortification. Now Siddhartha considered a Middle Way between those two extremes. He remembered an experience from his childhood when his mind had settled into a state of deep peace. He saw that the path of liberation was through the discipline of mind, and he realized that, instead of starvation, he needed nourishment to build up his strength for the effort. When he accepted a bowl of rice milk from a young girl, his companions assumed he had given up the quest, and they abandoned him.

The Enlightenment of the Buddha

Siddhartha sat beneath a sacred fig tree (*Ficus religiosa*), known ever after as the Bodhi Tree (bodhi means "awakened"). It was there that he settled into meditation. The struggle within Siddhartha's mind came to be mythologized as a great battle with Mara. The demon's name means "destruction" and represents the passions that snare and delude us. Mara brought vast armies of monsters to attack Siddhartha, who sat still and untouched. Mara's most beautiful daughter tried to seduce Siddhartha, but this effort also failed. Finally, Mara claimed that the seat of enlightenment rightfully belonged to him. Mara's spiritual accomplishments were greater than Siddhartha's, the demon said. Mara's monstrous soldiers cried out together, "I am his witness!" Mara challenged Siddhartha, "Who will speak for you?" Then Siddhartha reached out his right hand to touch the earth, and the earth itself roared, "I bear you witness!" Mara disappeared. As the morning star rose in the sky, Siddhartha Gautama realized enlightenment and became a buddha, which is defined as "a person who has achieved full enlightenment."

Experiences of Mystics

From the book 'Adventures in Vedanta' by Swami Yatiswarananda

The great Christian mystic, St. Augustine—one of the greatest of the ancient Church Fathers—was, in the beginning, a pleasure-loving youth. Then a tremendous change came over him and, as he prayed, a spiritual force which the mind itself was unable to grasp came to his assistance; it enabled him to look beyond the vortex of his ego and he saw something permeating his ego. He came directly in contact with God—the Divine Reality—who, as he said 'precedes all human knowledge and exists independently of the ability of the human mind to know Him'. His prayer was: 'I beseech Thee to discover to me myself.' The sinner became a saint. The egocentric became cosmocentric. Rabbia, the lady mystic of Sufism, was sick. Two holy men visited her. One of them said: 'Whose prayer is pure will God's chastisements endure.' The other uttered his experience: 'He who loves his master's choice will in chastisement rejoice.' But Rabbia replied: 'O men of grace, he who sees his Master's face, will not in his prayers recall that he is chastised at all!' Rabbia would pray: 'O my Lord, if I worship from fear of hell, burn me in hell-fire. If I worship Thee for hope of paradise, exclude me from paradise. But if I worship Thee for Thine own sake, then withhold not from me Thy eternal beauty.' When, by following the path of worship and prayer, the spiritual seeker feels the living presence of God within his own soul as well as in all beings, the false ego which hypnotizes the soul disappears yielding place to a new spiritual consciousness. He thus rises above the phenomenal existence and calculations and remains absorbed in God. Chaitanya, in his earlier days, was a great scholar fond of disputations and discourses. But his meeting with the Vaishnava saint, Isvara Puri, at Gaya, and his visit to the

temple there brought about a great change in him. Then he had visions in the temple which completely transformed him. He began to preach divine love, bringing light and devotion to many. He had dehypnotized himself. 'Love for the name of God, compassion for all loving beings and loving service to the devotees of the Lord' became his life-long message. Dehypnotized souls not only come to attain a new spirit of consciousness and joy but this the compassionate ones try to share with their fellow beings. Then we have the instance of a strange man of illumination—an illiterate, one who had absolutely no secular education, and yet attained to the highest wisdom. Swami Adbhutananda was of a humble family. He was a houseboy. But Sri Ramakrishna noticed the boy's spiritual potentiality and took him under his care. There was a great spiritual awakening in the boy who, later on, attained great spiritual realization and became a sage, a God-man. When someone asked him if he could prove that God exists in everyone, he answered: 'Why not, but it is a subjective experience. Love cannot be explained to another. Only the one who loves understands it and also the one who is loved. It is the same with God; He knows, and the one whom He blesses knows. Man is ever conscious of the existence of the Self. Every time he says: "My body, my mind, my intelligence," etc., he unconsciously admits of an "I"—of the Self. But he is unable to manifest his real nature. Hence the necessity of spiritual disciplines, and the firm will to unfold his latent divinity.' This is exactly what the learned Vivekananda also taught. When the so-called literate and the illiterate experience the same Divine Spirit and draw their inspiration from the same Source, they speak the same language and give expression to the same spiritual ideal.

Shodashi puja

From the book "Sri Ramakrishna-The Great Master", by Swami Saradananda

A little more than half of the month of Jyaishta, B.E. 1280 (A.D. May 25, 1873) had elapsed. It was the new-moon day, the holy occasion for the worship of the Phalaharini Kali Devi. The Master had made special preparations on that day with a view to worshipping the Mother of the universe. These preparations, however, had not been made in the temple, but, privately, in his own room at his desire. A wooden seat painted with Alimpana, the pigment of rice powder, for the Devi to sit on at the time of worship, had been placed to the right of the worshipper. The sun had set. The new-moon night veiled in deep darkness had lighted on the earth.

It was 9 p.m. when all the preparations for the mystery-worship of the Devi were completed. In the meantime, the Master had sent word to the Holy Mother to be present during the worship. She came to the room and the Master started the worship. The articles of worship were purified by the Mantras and all the rites preliminary to the worship were finished. The Master beckoned to the Holy Mother to sit on the wooden seat decorated with Alimpana. While witnessing the worship, the Holy Mother had already entered into a divine semiconscious state. Not clearly conscious, therefore, of what she was doing, she, like one charmed with Mantras, sat facing north to the right of the Master, who was seated with his face to the east. According to scriptural injunctions the Master sprinkled the Holy Mother repeatedly with the water purified by Mantras from the pitcher placed before him. He then uttered the Mantra in her hearing and then recited the prayer: "O Lady, O Mother Tripurasundari, who art the controller of all powers, open the door to perfection; purify her (the Holy Mother's) body and mind, manifest Thyself in her and be beneficent."

Afterwards the Master performed the Nyasa of the Mantras in the Holy Mother's person and offered food and put a part of it to her mouth with his own hand. The Holy Mother lost normal consciousness and went into Samadhi. The Master too uttering Mantras in the semiconscious state, entered into complete Samadhi. The worshipper in Samadhi became perfectly identified and united with the Devi in Samadhi. "O Thou, auspiciousness of all auspicious things, O doer of all actions, O refuge, O three-eyed One, O Thou fair-complexioned spouse of Siva, O Narayani, I bow down to Thee, I bow down to Thee." The worship was at an end. The Master's Sadhana reached its culmination with the worship of the Ruler of the universe, the divine Mother in the body of a woman, the embodiment of spiritual knowledge itself; the god-man attained *perfection in all respects*.

From the book "Vedanta and the West"

One day Swamiji, Swami Yogananda, and others arranged a picnic in the Panchavati. The Master came and joined in our games for a while. On another day I saw the Master passing frequently into samadhi. When he came down to normal consciousness, he spoke of God-vision and Self-realization, saying, "One's own favourite aspect of God is oneself. The Chosen Ideal and Atman are identical. The vision of the Chosen Ideal leads to self-knowledge. In other words, self-knowledge is the fulfillment of one's Chosen Ideal. Alas! How wonderful was the attitude of Prahlad. Sometimes he said 'Not I,' and in another mood 'I am Thy servant, oh Lord!' But there were moments when his mind soared to the empyrean region of the absolute state where he said 'I am He,' and remained still and speechless." Another day I went to Dakshineswar. The northern veranda at that time was enclosed and contained two bed-steads on the east and west sides respectively. That night I slept on one, and Harish on the other. In the small hours just before dawn the Master got up and chanted Om just like an angel and passed into samadhi. At the same time, Harish began to sing the names of the deities, Durga, Shiva, and others. In that blessed moment in the Master's room the sky above and the air around were all overpowered by the silence of samadhi. Like a fruit in my palm, God became perceptible to me inside and outside. Then a few days later I came to Dakshineswar, took my bath in the Ganges, and sat in the Master's room. Many devotees arrived and talks on God poured out in a torrent through the Master's lips. Shortly after the meal he rested a while and stretched himself on his smaller cot, turning his head southward. He called me and asked me to massage his feet and hands. I drew his legs onto my lap and was passing my hands over them when he smilingly began to tell me many beautiful things on spiritual life which I later communicated to Swami Brahmananda, who said he had been told the same things by the Master previously. While massaging his feet I rubbed his two big toes on my forehead as if I were drawing the Vaishnava marks. The Master smiled, "What are you doing, my boy?" "Why," I replied, "you told me that those who are of a sattwic nature while bathing in the Ganges draw marks on their foreheads with its sacred water, whereas those who are rajasic [active, passionate, meretricious] cover their bodies with marks of vermilion and white and red sandal paste. Today I am putting the sattwic marks on my forehead. What is there on earth more sacred than your holy feet?" The Master seemed glad and smiled joyfully. Other gurus teach their disciples to follow a set of fixed rules and regulations and thereby help their spiritual unfoldment. But the case of our Master was very different—even extraordinary. He was a unique type of spiritual teacher. He blessed those who came to him by mere touch, by mere look, or mere wish. In this way he transmitted spiritual powers through which the recipients got spiritual experiences. He wanted all of us to enjoy the bliss of God-union. How eager was he to rouse the dormant spirituality in us and awaken our souls to God-consciousness! To his intimate disciples he spoke of his spiritual illuminations and inspired us to attain them. Hari Om!

Swami Brahmananda with Swami Vivekananda

Swami Brahmananda was the first President of Ramakrishna Math. Besides being a monk of the highest level, as an administrator too he had excellent qualities. However much somebody might have erred, he would never let him down before others. When the Belur math was to be built, he requested the engineer monk [Swami Vijnanananda] to prepare a budget so that he can pass it on to Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) then in America, who wanted to collect the money and send for building the temple of Thakur. The engineer monk gave a budget of Rs. 9 lakhs for the entire temple.

Vivekananda collected and sent the amount to them and later on when he came back to India inquired with Swami Brahmananda whether the work was completed. Brahmananda in all innocence told him that the amount of Rs. 9 lakhs he sent was just sufficient to lay the foundation while another Rs.18 lakhs were required for finishing the building. Vivekananda was furious. He lashed at Brahmananda for his lack of efficiency and asked him, "How can it be that you gave me an estimate of Rs. 9 lakhs and now you say another Rs.18 lakhs are required?" Brahmananda left the room without any reply. He went back to his room and shut himself inside. When Vivekananda calmed down he was told that Rakhai Maharaj [Brahmananda] did not take his meals and nor did he come of the room at all. Vivekananda went to his room and pounded on the door, "Dada Dada open the door." There was no reply. Vivekananda began to dash his head once or twice against the door and told, "Dada, if you don't open the door within another 2 minutes, I shall dash my head against this door and shall leave my body in your presence."

Immediately the door was opened and both of them embraced each other with profuse tears in their eyes.

Vivekananda profusely apologised to him for his conduct and begged pardon. He assured him that he would go back to the States and try his best to get the balance money required. After a couple of days, Rakhai Maharaj called Vijnanananda and told him, "How have you let me down? You are an engineer and not a layman. How could it be that your budget could vary about 300%?" Vijnanananda calmly replied, "if only I had given the true budget at the beginning itself, Swamiji (Vivekananda) would have refused to go ahead with his work and such a nice temple will not be raised for the Thakur and hence intentionally I understated the budget because I knew that when once the foundation is laid, he cannot but bring the balance money to finish the work. I can show you my original budget sheet with me where I have worked out the expenditure at Rs. 27 lakhs."

Where could one witness such an intense devotion to Gurudev as these people had to Thakur? May the Lord grant us all a small percentage of this devotion so that we could reach our goal..

Events	Date & Time
Buddha Jayanti	May 15, 2022 – 11:00 am
Guru Purnima	July 13, 2022 - 6.30 pm
Annual Retreat	Day-1: July 23, 2022 – 8:30 am – 4:30 pm & Day-2: July 24, 2022 - 8:30 am – 4:30 pm
Sri Krishna Janmashtami	Aug 18, 2022 – 6.30 pm

Saturday, May 25, 1885

A DEVOTEE: "Sir, what is the way for worldly people?"

MASTER: "The company of holy men. Worldly people should listen to spiritual talk. They are in a state of madness, intoxicated with 'woman and gold'. A drunkard should be given rice-water as an antidote. Drinking it slowly, he gradually recovers his normal consciousness. A worldly person should also receive instructions from a sadguru, a real teacher. Such a teacher has certain signs. You should hear about Benares only from a man who has been to Benares and seen it. Mere book-learning will not do. One should not receive instruction from a pundit who has not realized the world to be unreal. Only if a pundit has discrimination and renunciation is he entitled to instruct. Samadhyayi remarked that God was dry. Think of his speaking like that of Him who is the embodiment of sweetness! It sounds like the remark, 'My uncle's cow-shed is full of horses.' (All laugh.)

"Yes, a worldly person is in a state of intoxication. He always says to himself: 'It is I who am doing everything. All these — the house and family — are mine.' Baring his teeth, he says: 'What will happen to my wife and children without me? How will they get along? Who will look after my wife and children?' Rakhal said one day, 'What will happen to my wife?'"

HARAMOHAN: "Did Rakhal say that?"

MASTER: "What else could he do? He who has knowledge has ignorance also. 'How amazing!' Lakshmana said to Rama. 'Even a sage like Vasishtha is stricken with grief because of the death of his sons!' 'Brother,' replied Rama, 'he who has knowledge has ignorance also. Therefore go beyond both knowledge and ignorance.' Suppose a thorn has pierced a man's foot. He picks another thorn to pull out the first one. After extracting the first thorn with the help of the second, he throws both away. One should use the thorn of knowledge to pull out the thorn of ignorance. Then one throws away both the thorns, knowledge and ignorance, and attains vijnana. What is vijnana? It is to know God distinctly by realizing His existence through an intuitive experience and to speak to Him intimately. That is why Sri Krishna said to Arjuna, 'Go beyond the three gunas.' In order to attain vijnana one has to accept the help of vidyamaya. Vidyamaya includes discrimination — that is to say, God is real and the world illusory — and dispassion, and also chanting God's name and glories, meditation, the company of holy persons, prayer, and so forth. Vidyamaya may be likened to the last few steps before the roof. Next is the roof, the realization of God.

From "*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna – At Ram's House*".

2022 Annual Summer Retreat

This year, the Vedanta Society will hold its **in-premise** Annual Summer Retreat, details as mentioned below. **Pravrajika Krishnaprana Mataji, a senior nun from Sarada Convent, Santa Barbara, a sub-center of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood will be conducting the Retreat. Topics to be discussed are: Grace, Effort, Faith and Gratitude**

Day 1 - July 23, 2022- 8:30 am – 4:30 pm

Day 2 - July 24, 2022- 8:30 am – 4:30 pm

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

Registration fee (includes breakfast and lunch):

Attendance for **One day** – \$50 per person; for **Both days** – \$90 per person.

Participants are requested to email their confirmation toronto@rkmm.org before **July 1, 2022**, mentioning their name, and how many days they want to attend. Payment can be made on the day of the Retreat by cheque or by Credit / Debit cards.

Vedanta Society of Toronto

Minister and Teacher- Swami Kripamayananda, Ramakrishna Order of India

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 11:00am Lecture: (Online and In person) <i>'The Compassionate Buddha'</i>	2	3	4	5	6 7:30pm Scripture class: <i>'Uddhava Gita'</i>	7
8 11:00am Lecture: (Online and In person) <i>'Mother's Heart'</i> 5:00pm RAMNAM	9	10	11	12	13 7:30pm Scripture class (Online only): <i>'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'</i>	14 6 am to 6 pm VIGIL
15 11:00am (Online and In person) BUDDHA JAYANTI CELEBRATION	16	17	18	19	20 NO SCRIPTURE CLASS	21
22 11:00am NO SUNDAY SERVICE	23	24	25	26	27 7:30pm Scripture class: <i>'Uddhava Gita'</i>	28
29 11:00am Lecture (Online and In person): <i>'Ramakrishna and Sarada'</i>	30	31				

AN APPEAL FOR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL & DONATION

In these difficult times going through around the world, our attendance has significantly dropped at the Centre and maintenance costs are ongoing, 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 2022, 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.