



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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Newsletter December 2015

Words to Inspire

“You can realize Him right now, if you become desireless.”

- Sri Sarada Devi

The first vivid display of the Master’s power as a guru occurred in his birthplace at Kamarpukur after he had been invested with the sacred thread. He would have been nine or ten years old at the time. The celebrated pandits in that part of the country were invited to a shraddha ceremony at the home of the Lahas, the village landlords. As is usual when many pandits gather in one place, they started debating vociferously. When after prolonged discussion the pandits could not come to a conclusion on a particular scriptural point, the boy Gadadhar asked a pandit whom he knew, “Can’t the problem be solved in this way?” Then he stated a solution.

At first this pandit was amazed when he realized that this wonderful boy had patiently listened to the various arguments, had understood everything, and had now reached a sensible conclusion. Then he told his friends what Gadadhar had said, and they all agreed it was the only solution to the dispute. They inquired whose keen intellect had first discovered such a wonderful solution. When they learned that it was the boy Gadadhar, some looked at him in awe and considered him to be endowed with divine powers; others joyously took him on their laps and blessed him.

This subject must be elaborated upon. A similar incident, concerning Jesus Christ, is recorded in the Bible. This divine incarnation was then 12 years old. At that time he was taken by his poor and pious parents, Joseph and Mary, on a pilgrimage with others from their native village of Nazareth in the province of Galilee to offer worship at the famous temple of Jehovah in

Jerusalem. This holy place of the Jews was like any of the pilgrim centres of the Hindus. Devout aspirants considered themselves blessed to see the holy presence of Jehovah in a golden casket and to worship the deity with light and incense on an altar, by offering flowers, fruits, and sweets and by sacrificing animals and birds, such as sheep and pigeons.

Joseph and Mary completed their visit, worship, and sacrifice as was customary and then started on the return journey to their village with their companions. At that time the condition of the pilgrims who came from different countries to visit Jerusalem was to

some extent similar to those who visited Puri and other holy places on foot before the railways were laid in India.

While they were on their way home, Joseph and Mary could not find Jesus in their group. At first they thought he was perhaps following the party with other pilgrim boys.

But when they could not find Jesus after proceeding quite a distance, they became worried. They looked everywhere but could not locate him. Anxious, they returned to Jerusalem and searched in various places but still could not find him. Finally they entered the Jehovah temple and found the boy Jesus discussing scriptures with scholars, enchanting them all by elucidating complicated spiritual questions that had confounded those pandits.

From ‘*Sri Ramakrishna and His Divine Play*’

Pp 332-334.

The Christ We Worship

(Based on a talk by Swami Kripamayanda on December 23, 2012)

‘We bow to Lord Christ, we worship him whose sweet and simple words revealed the truth of God, who suffered, nailed to the Cross even though he was the son of God, supremely holy, the son of Mary, the friend of All, the image of supreme Love, the Lord of the humble devotees.’

Worship means respecting someone who is worthy of love, respect and appreciation. There are different ways of worship, The Jews bow down or prostrate and worship is called in Hebrew as Sacha. In Greece, they kiss the hand of the person they want to worship. In Japan they worship by bowing down their head and bending forward. The Christians worship by kneeling down before the Cross or a picture of Christ. They, then, listen to the sermon of the priest with attention and respect. In other religions, they worship God in their own ways with love and reverence. In Hinduism, worship is done by bowing down on the knees and touching the ground with their forehead, which is called Pranam. Also one makes offering of fruits, flowers, leaves, sweets and whatever one feels that his or her beloved deity likes. But in all these various ways of worship, one thing is common and that is, Love. You may offer your reverence to God in any way you like, but if it is not sweetened with love, then the offering becomes futile. In the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna says to Arjuna, “You may offer me even water or a simple leaf, or flower or fruits, but it should be with love, that is acceptable to me”.

Hindus worship various forms of God- Rama, Krishna, Chaitanya, Kali, Shiva, Ganesha, Ramakrishna and even Jesus. For Hindus Jesus is an incarnation of God. Sri Ramakrishna called Jesus as Rishi Kesto – or Sage Christ, and said that Jesus is an incarnation of God. He explained that different forms emerge from the vast ocean of Satchidananda, at different ages, to uplift Dharma and again dissolve back in the same ocean. Rama, Krishna, Jesus, Chaitanya, came at different times to give right direction to Dharma, so they are not different but various forms of the same Supreme Being. Jesus was born of Mother Mary and Father Joseph in a very poor shepherd family, in a manger. From his childhood, he never cared to possess anything and was full of love of God. When your primary focus becomes God, then you don’t feel like going to the world and possessing anything. Same happened with Jesus, as he became a young man, he embraced monasticism. Jesus says- Even foxes and birds have

their homes, but son of Man does not think of tomorrow. Is this callousness that we should not think of tomorrow? No, this is a very important teaching, especially for the monks. We must have complete dependence on God. Then He takes care of us fully. Krishna has said in the Gita – If your mind is constantly thinking of me alone, then I will take your responsibility. Jesus’ life was full of renunciation, and yet he had great desire to lead mankind towards blessedness, happiness and knowledge. He was born to remove their sufferings. As he travelled across Israel, he gave sermons and told parables. The most important sermon was given on a mountain. His listeners included people from all walks of life– rich and poor, good and bad. His teachings include– ‘Love all, love your enemies, do not judge others. Trust and have faith in God. Don’t be anxious about tomorrow. Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you’. If we practice these teachings of the Master, then there will be no animosity, no hatred among people. If you want to be respected then respect others. World is like a mirror. Whatever you do to the world, it will boomerang back. We remember the incident where people were stoning the woman who committed adultery. That was the law of the land at that time. The people asked Jesus, whether he approved of the sin that the woman had committed. Jesus did not challenge the law, but he said– ‘Let the man who has committed no sin pick up the first stone.’ This way the lady was saved. Similarly Jesus drank the water from the hands of a lowly lady, who was not respected by the society. His love for womankind was like Sri Ramakrishna’s love for womankind. Once, two woman devotees visited Sri Ramakrishna. They were fasting. Sri Ramakrishna disapproved of their fasting and gave them Prasad to eat. He said that he felt great pain when he saw womankind suffering or doing penances. He respected woman as forms of Divine Mother.

Jesus, just like Sri Ramakrishna, taught in parables or stories with moral or practical lessons for life. Swami Vivekananda noted what is mentioned as sin in the Bible, is nothing but ignorance or weaknesses which can be removed by Knowledge.

There are many similarities between Jesus and Sri Ramakrishna, which is the reason why Jesus is very close to the followers of Sri Ramakrishna. Jesus always mentioned that whatever he spoke were his Father’s command, whatever I do is to please my

Father. This is exactly similar to Sri Ramakrishna, who used to say that whatever he spoke were the words of Divine Mother. They were both egoless. Jesus taught us to love God with all heart, mind and strength. Jesus spent his whole life serving the poor and needy, he wept at the sight of suffering and misery of the people. Sri Ramakrishna's sixteen disciples were very simple at heart, with great potential inside and came from various walks of life. Jesus also had twelve disciples who came from various disciplines, but had great potential inside themselves. One of his disciples was a Tax collector. People used to abhor a Tax-collector, but Jesus accepted him and he got changed into a saint. Similar case is seen in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, he accepted Girish Ghosh and Kalipada Ghosh who were drunkards and were completely shunned by the society. By His holy company their lives changed. Another disciple of Jesus was a simple fisherman, but had tremendous faith in Jesus and by serving Jesus, became a great saint. Similarly Lata, later Swami Adbhutananda, was an illiterate village boy who came to Sri Ramakrishna and just by following and serving him he achieved the highest God realization. Jesus taught- If a person slaps you on your cheek, give him the other cheek. This was a novel teaching. During that time it was not easy to explain the import of such teaching to the common man. Jesus served mankind throughout his life of thirty three years although he carried his ministration and miracles for only three years towards the end of his life. Jesus followed the scriptures and led the most pure life. When he was crucified, people saw him reciting from the scriptures of the Judaism. In that painful moment also Jesus was not angry. He prayed to God to pardon the very people who crucified and nailed him. Swami Vivekananda said- 'If I would have met Jesus, then I would have washed his feet not with my tears, but with the blood of my heart.' He had so much love and adoration for Jesus! The very foundation of Ramakrishna Mission was made with the resolve of Narendranath and his brother disciples to embrace renunciation inspired by the life of Jesus. When they decided this they even did not know that it was a Christmas eve. On Dec 24th 1886 at Antpur village Swami Vivekananda and few other disciples of Sri Ramakrishna sat under the open, bright, and starlit sky in the evening and lit a fire. They sat for meditation for a long time. After the meditation they

were discussing about God when Narendranath had a rare inspiration and started talking about the life of Jesus, his penance and sacrifice. His words were so eloquent and so powerful that everyone was deeply moved. He then talked about St. Paul and other disciples of Jesus whose hard labour and sacrifice made it possible for Christianity as a religion and the Christians as religious group to come up and prosper. He exhorted his brother disciples to shape themselves as the monks and called upon them to sacrifice their lives for the welfare of mankind. Swami Vivekananda along with other eight brother disciples renounced the world.

We now discuss how Sri Ramakrishna got the vision of Jesus. Very near the Kali temple was the garden-house of Shambhu Charan Mallik. He was greatly devoted to Ramakrishna who too used to visit his house often. Sometimes Shambhu would read from the Bible to him. Hearing it one day, the desire to have the vision of Christ arose in Ramakrishna's mind. That desire was fulfilled in a strange manner. One day Ramakrishna was sitting in the parlour of another devotee named Jadunath Mallik. On the wall there was a beautiful picture of the Madonna and Child. Ramakrishna began looking at it attentively and thinking of the wonderful life of Jesus Christ. Suddenly he felt that the picture was becoming alive. The rays of light were coming from the figures of Mary and the child Jesus and entering into himself. With this profound experience, Sri Ramakrishna's mind was filled with thoughts of Christ. For the moment he forgot his Mother Kali. For three days Ramakrishna was in that condition. Even though he had returned to Dakshineswar he did not visit the Kali temple for those three days. On the fourth day, when he was walking near the Panchavati, he saw a wonderful person of serene countenance coming towards him. Ramakrishna wondered who he could be when he heard an inner voice, 'This is the Christ who poured out his heart's blood to save mankind.' Then the glorious figure embraced him and merged into him. Ramakrishna had thus realized the Truth of God through various religious paths, and found that all religions were true; they were only so many paths to the same God.

Let me conclude with Swami Vivekananda's words about the Christ- 'If I, as an oriental, have to worship Jesus of Nazareth there is only one way left to me, that is, to worship him as God and nothing else.'

The Message of Jesus Christ

The life of Jesus Christ, in order to be properly appreciated, has to be studied against a historical background. To the Hindu mind his advent is a fulfilment of the message delivered by the Lord Sri Krishna in the Gita that whenever virtue declines and vice triumphs in this world the Lord incarnates himself in human form so that there may be a rehabilitation of his kingdom on earth. A close examination of the lives of almost all prophets establishes the fundamental truth of this principle, and from this point of view the birth of Jesus may be said to have been a historical necessity. The great Roman Empire which wielded power and suzerainty over a large part of the world in those days had fallen from the highest pinnacles of glory to the lowest depths of degradation. Religion at that time was at a discount and a premium was put upon all kinds of the most abominable vice. It was in this eventful period of the world's history that God thought it fit to send down His beloved son in order that He might once again lead His people along the true path and deliver them from the morass into which they had fallen, and which would only have the effect of leading them on to complete destruction and annihilation.

To my mind the essence of his preaching resolves itself into this basic precept that the aim of all human life is to realize the divinity which is latent in every individual. 'The kingdom of God is within you,' he said, and the first and foremost duty of man is to enter that kingdom in order that he may enjoy everlasting peace and happiness. In Chapter 12 of St. Mark this is made clear in language which leaves no ambiguity about it: 'And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment.' And he goes on to say that the only way to achieve this consummation is through renunciation. So long as there is attachment to worldly things the kingdom of heaven will only remain a distant vision and a dream which can never be realized. 'Sell all thou hast', and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.' 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'

Christ was a Sannyasin who had nothing in the world to call his own and only lived in an ecstasy of communion with God Himself. 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.' He was himself a shining example of the precept which he preached: 'Take no thought of the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself,' an advice which can only be given by one who has shaken off the slightest vestige of attachment for the things of this earth. But then it would be wrong to suppose that Jesus wanted all men to be Sannyasins.

For the householders he lays down a code of conduct which tells them to repent for their sins, to obey their parents, warns them against stealing and against bearing false witness, against adultery even in thought, against all kinds of hypocrisy which was characteristic in those days. Blessed are the pure in heart,' says he, 'for they shall see God.' It is this purity of heart on which the greatest stress has been laid. The heart is the source and the fountain of all our actions, and if the heart is not pure our outward actions and words are of no consequence, whatever we may do. It is exactly the same sentiment which finds an echo in Sri Ramakrishna's words, 'Man mukh ek kara,' to be sincere in word, thought and deed, which alone can confer a passport to the eternal happiness of God's kingdom.

His second commandment was, 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' Again in another passage he gives us, some idea of his concept of the kingdom of God. 'Suffer little children to come unto me for of such is the kingdom of God. The greatest stress is here laid on humility like that of a little child. A child is sincere, trustful, humble, 'and man must also possess all these qualities in order to qualify himself for God's kingdom. As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'One who realizes the divinity within him becomes like a child who has no strong attachments to anything.' It is this faith of a child, absolute un-reserving faith which is required. And the virtue of this faith is extolled in these words: 'Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.'

The one great quality in the character of Jesus, which also strikes us as the most prominent, is his infinite love and unbounded mercy. When on the Cross in an agony of despair he cried out: 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? We find him at the same time praying for his enemies and those who crucified him, 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do,' a living and shining example of putting into actual practice his own precept: 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despite fully use you .and persecute you.'

The passage of two thousand years has not dimmed the effulgence of his countenance or lessened the value and universality of his teachings from which millions of weary souls still derive inspiration and consolation. May he on this day shower his choicest blessings on us all; may he usher in an era of peace on earth and good will among men; .and in the sublime language of the Vedic seers, with which I will end this short discourse, may he in his abundant mercy lead us from the unreal unto the real, from darkness unto light, and from death unto immortality. Amen.

JESUS CHRIST AND HIS MESSAGE – By S. R. DAS GUPTA .. (From the Archives of Prabuddha Bharata)

IMPORTANT EVENTS OF THE MONTH

Guest Lecture: 'Be Attached' on December 6 at 11 am by **Swami Atmajnanananda**, Minister in-charge, Vedanta Centre of Greater Washington DC.

CHRISTMAS will be celebrated on December 24 at 6pm. The program consists of Prayer, singing Carols, offering candles to Jesus Christ.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Holy Mother's Birthday & Kalpataru Day will be celebrated on **January 1, 2016** at 11 am

Swami Vivekananda's Birthday will be celebrated on **January 31, 2016** at 11 am

REGULAR PROGRAMMES

SCRIPTURE CLASS: Every Friday at 7:30 pm, following the regular evening prayer at 6:00 pm.

VIGIL: A vigil consisting of japa and meditation is observed from 6:00am to 6:00pm. For the date of this month's vigil, please see the 'Calendar of Events' on the next page. *To participate, please call the Centre.*

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

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 instruction. 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.

DAILY BREAD FOOD BANK: Many less fortunate families are dependent on the food bank for their daily nutrition. Please help us by contributing non-perishable food items that we may pass along to the Daily Bread Food Bank.

SOUP KITCHEN: The Soup is cooked at the Vedanta Society and offered serving meals at Syme Woolner Neighbourhood & Family Centre, 2468 Eglinton Ave W, Unit 3, Toronto, ON, M6M 5E2. Please contact the Centre, if you are interested in participating. *Donations for the Soup Kitchen will be highly appreciated*

BOOK STORE: The Book Store is open after Sunday Services and special programmes, and arrangements can be made by phone for weekday and Saturday visits. We carry selected titles from the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature, as well as other Vedantic materials.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Parking on the road beside the Vedanta Society which is a Fire Route and which belongs to the West Park Hospital, is strictly prohibited. West Park Hospital has informed that they are going to give tickets @ \$250.00 for illegal parking on the road as well as in their property other than the designated parking area.

Vedanta Society of Toronto

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Minister and Teacher - Swami Kripamayanda, Ramakrishna Order of India

December 2015

Sunday	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Friday	Saturday
		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>4</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: 'Vivekachudamani'	<u>5</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen
<u>6</u> 11am Guest Lecture: "Be Attached" by Swami Atmajnanananda 1:30 pm VVM	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>11</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>12</u> 6am to 6pm Vigil
<u>13</u> 11am Lecture: "Accepting the Change" 1:30 pm VVM	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>18</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: 'Vivekachudamani'	<u>19</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen
<u>20</u> 11am Lecture: "Mother Mary" 5pm: RamNam	<u>21</u>	<u>22</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u> 6:00pm CHRISTMAS EVE CELEBRATION 	<u>25</u> WINTER RECESS STARTS	<u>26</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen
<u>27</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>30</u>	<u>31</u>		

THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF TORONTO WILL BE OBSERVING WINTER RECESS
FROM DEC 25, 2015 TO FRIDAY, JAN 08, 2016.

(No Sunday Service and Scripture Class during this period)

Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year!
May peace and spiritual blessings be yours in the coming year and always!