



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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Newsletter February 2015

Words to Inspire

**"The words of a man are like the tusks of the elephant: they come out but do not go back.
A man must be true to his word."**

-SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Sri Ramakrishna - who He was

Ramakrishna knew that his nature was divine. He cloaked himself in his yogamaya to enact his divine play so that he could appear as a normal human being. Sometimes he disclosed his identity to his close devotees. Once he said: "There is no outsider here. The other day, when Harish was with me, I saw Satchidananda come out of this sheath. It said, 'I incarnate Myself in every age.'... I saw that it is the fullest manifestation of Satchidananda; but this time the Divine Power is manifested through the glory of sattva."

When Ramakrishna's mother was dying at Dakshineswar, her body was carried to the bakul-tala ghat on the Ganges. The Master cried as he held his mother's feet, and exclaimed: "Mother, how fortunate you are that you carried me in your womb!" As a grief-stricken man, the Master mourned for his mother; but as a divine being, he told her that she was not an ordinary woman: she had carried Narayana, the Supreme Brahman, in her womb.

Two important words appear in the Vedanta scriptures: sva-samvedya and para-samvedya. Sva-samvedya indicates that a jnani, a knower of Brahman, knows his or her own true nature. Para-samvedya indicates that people evaluate the state of a jnani by looking for certain signs described in the scriptures. The Master sometimes became one with Brahman in nirvikalpa samadhi, but when he descended to the dualistic plane, he perceived the world as we do. He told his devotees: "There are two persons in this (his body): One is the Divine Mother.

And the other is Her devotee. It is the devotee who broke his arm, and it is the devotee who is now ill....Do you

understand? Alas! To whom shall I say all this? Who will understand me?"

The Master would point to himself and say: "It is like an image of Shiva that has not been set up by human hands but is a natural one that has sprung up, as it were, from the bowels of the earth." The Master would cry from the heart for the welfare of suffering humanity. On 15 March 1886 he said to M: "If the body were to be preserved a few days more, many people would have their spirituality awakened. But this is not to be. Such is not the will of God. This time the body will not be preserved, lest, finding me guileless and foolish, people should take advantage of me, and lest I, guileless and foolish as I am, should give away everything to everybody. In this Kaliyuga, you see, people are averse to meditation and japa."

The Master himself declared: "He who was Rama and he who was Krishna is now Ramakrishna in this body." This is a clear statement that needs no explanation. As the same moon rises again and again, so the same God descends to earth as an avatar at different times and at different places. After fulfilling the need of the age, the avatar returns to his or her own abode. Ramakrishna said: "Seeing an incarnation of God is the same as seeing God Himself." Jesus also said: "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father. I and my Father are one."

-From 'How to Live with God'

by Sw. Chetanananda; pp 114-115,

Swamiji's Vesper Song on Sri Ramakrishna

Based on a lecture by Swami Kripamayanda at Vedanta Society of Toronto on September 16, 2012

Once, Girish Chandra Ghosh asked Swami Vivekananda to write the life of Sri Ramakrishna. Swamiji said, "GC (Swamiji used to call Girish Chandra as 'GC'), "You can ask me to do anything else, I am ready to do it. But please don't ask me to write the life of Sri Ramakrishna, whom I have known so little. At the end, instead of making the image of Shiva, I may end up in making the image of a monkey". Imagine Swamiji saying, that he knew Sri Ramakrishna so little! Presenting Sri Ramakrishna is extremely difficult, even for such a divine soul like Swami Vivekananda. In fact, Swamiji seldom spoke about Sri Ramakrishna in the West. Probably he gave just two lectures on Sri Ramakrishna— one in New York and another in London, UK. When Swamiji reached India, he founded the Ramakrishna Mission, the purpose of which was to help people realize God, through the practice of various Yogas and serve fellow human beings, The word Yoga means, to unite the individual soul with the Supreme soul. True religion is the direct relation between man and God. No dogmas or doctrines can disturb this relationship. Swamiji realized that every individual soul is divine and has the potential to unite with the Supreme.

Swamiji portrayed Sri Ramakrishna through His principles. He composed a great vesper song, '*Khandana Bhava Bandhana...*' in Sanskritized Bengali, which anyone can sing and anyone having a basic knowledge of Sanskrit can also comprehend. Swamiji also composed the music for this poem in Dhrupad style, and this is sung in all Ramakrishna Centres all over the world, especially during the evening prayers.

When the sun starts setting in the western horizon and the nature all around, becomes calm and serene. The daylight dwindles down towards the darkness, it is the time when our mind also wants to settle down, stop all interaction with the world and quieten itself from the drudgery of worldly dealings. This is the time that we visit the shrine, maybe in the temple or in the corner of our house and sit quietly, mind drawn inward towards deeper thought, which is called 'The Call of God'. In India, during dusk, we hear the sound of conch from almost every household. In Belur Math, the whole atmosphere gets charged with a serene calmness, Ganga flowing beside, birds returning to their nests, all devotees sitting down calmly in Sri Ramakrishna Temple, when this evening prayer starts with the accompaniment of Pakhawaj/Mridangam (drum which has a booming sound) and cymbal- *Khandana Bhava Bandhana...*

In this vesper song, Swamiji has described Sri Ramakrishna and also taught us how to pray to Him. The beauty of this poem is that although this is written about Sri Ramakrishna, there is no word 'Ramakrishna' in this song. In that manner, this song is very much universal and applies to anyone who

wants to pray to God. Let us now try to understand this vesper song composed by the great Swami.

***Khandana Bhava bandhana jaga vandana vandi tomay
Niranjana nara rupa dhara, nirguna guna moy.***

O breaker of the bondage of the worldliness, O the One adored by the world, (we) adore Thee.

The stainless, Thou has assumed a Human form; Thou art beyond gunas, Yet full of auspicious gunas.

We pray to God to break the bondage of this world. Why do we want to break the bondage, it is to get rid of misery. Due to this bondage, we get into the cycle of birth & death. But if we can understand that this world is temporary, ever changing and do not react to both happiness and misery, then this world will be a place of mirth and not bondage. To break this bondage we have to go near the god-men, to practice their teachings. Then we have to bow down to them (vandanam). In the nava-vidha bhakti, this Vandanam is a way to reach God. Without surrendering ourselves to God, we cannot get rid of our weaknesses.

Swamiji says- O Lord, you are free from all blemishes all weaknesses (Niranajana), stainless, sinless. If we want to get rid of our weakness, we have to approach someone who is truly strong. Also that Sinless Being has assumed a human form (Sri Ramakrishna). When there is a human body, there will be the three gunas or qualities – Satwa (purity), Rajas (action) and Tamas (lethargy). Everything in this world, including human mind and body, has these three gunas. These gunas bind us to the world. But an incarnation is not under the sway of any of these gunas. Sri Ramakrishna used to be always blissful. Then was He not concerned with the sorrows and misery of the human beings? In fact, He was full of compassion for the human beings, himself exhibited the highest level of humility, renunciation, love, respect for all.

***Mochana agha dushana jaga bhushana chid ghana-kay;
Jnananjana vimala nayana vikshane moha jay.***

O redeemer of all sins! O adornment for all the worlds! O pure consciousness condensed!

Thy eyes, sanctified with the collyrium of Jnana, shatter the delusion of world.

Here Swami Vivekananda refers Sri Ramakrishna as *Mochana agha-dushana* - the 'redeemer of sinful defects'. We must remember that Sri Ramakrishna himself used to say, that he does not find any 'I' in him, it is the Divine Mother who has occupied his body and mind. She is the one who is doing everything. Jaga bhushana– who makes the world beautiful. Swamiji again refers to the physical body of Sri Ramakrishna as *chid-ghana-kay* – made of condensed consciousness, not ordinary flesh and blood. We do find in the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna that the Master used to be always on the threshold of Samadhi. In one moment, He

would go into deep Samadhi, completely unconscious of his body. *Jnananjana vimala nayana*— His eyes were filled with purity or there was no 'mala' or dirt in his look, He never saw anything bad in anyone. So when such eyes perceive another being, *vikshane moha jay*— all dirt and delusion of the world gets washed away.

***Bhashwara bhava sagara chira unmada Prema pathar;
Bhaktarjana yugala charana tarana bhava par.***

Thou art verily an ocean of luminous and lofty spiritual sentiments, ever lashed into waves of inebriating love. Thy holy feet, devotion's reward, form a veritable boat for crossing the ocean of Samsara.

Swamiji says that O God, you are that luminous vastness, an ocean of spiritual emotions, always intoxicated with the love of God, who cannot be perceived with ordinary vision. But out of His immense love for the human beings, He came in human form, so that we can at least try to understand Him. Surrendering to His holy feet is the highest reward for any devotee, as the boat to clear this ocean of samsara.

***Jrimbhita yuga ishwara jagad ishwara Yoga sahay;
Nirodhana samahita mana nirakhi tava kripay.***

Thou art the Lord of the universe, manifested as the incarnation for the modern age, for helping mankind in its spiritual endeavour.

By Thy grace I clearly see this, O Thou whose mind is ever established in transcendent Samadhi!

O Lord, thou has manifested as the incarnation to help human beings achieve Samadhi, by controlling the senses and practising what you have preached, a human can surely attain the highest goal of life.

***Bhanjana dukha ganjana karunaghana karma kathor;
Pranarpana jagata tarana kritana kali dor.***

O shatterer of the mass of mankind's sorrows! O mercy condensed! O worker tremendous!

Thy life is an offering of love for the redemption of mankind, and a power that shatters the bondage of this dark age of Kaliyuga.

O Lord, you have the power to break the bonds of sadness. You are the condensed form of mercy, anyone surrendering to you have no fear and no sadness. Once, a fish came to His feet when He was bathing in a pond. He told people not to catch that fish, since it had taken shelter at His feet. Swamiji also calls him '*karma kathor*'. Sri Ramakrishna used to work continuously for the benefit of the devotees, who used to come all time of day and night asking for his guidance in spiritual matters. Even during his final days, when he was suffering with severe pain because of throat cancer, he always served the devotees. That is why Swamiji says that His life was an offering for the redemption of mankind. By following His teachings, one can easily be free from the bondage of the Kaliyuga.

***Vanchana kama kanchana ati nindita indriya rag;
Tyagishwara he nara vara deha pade anurag.***

Thou art the conqueror of lust and greed, and the spurner of all enticements of sensuous attractions.

Bestow on us unflinching love for Thy blessed feet, O Lord of all, the noblest of mankind!

Sri Ramakrishna treated every woman as mother and he could not touch money, such was his renunciation. One devotee tried to donate him Rs.10,000 which was a lot of money during those times and he himself, but he refused to accept that. He extremely despised the attraction to sense objects. Swamiji says – O Lord, you are the king among holy men, kindly remove our sense attachments and give us attachment and love to your lotus feet.

***Nirbhaya gata samsaya dridha nischaya manasavan;
Nishkarana bhakata sharana tyaji jati-kula-maan.***

Thy mind is above all fears, devoid of all doubts, and firm in its resolves.

Innocent of pride of birth and race, Thy universal love offers shelter to all devotees who seek it.

Sri Ramakrishna was extremely fearless and firm on his word. During his childhood, he promised a low caste woman 'Dhani kamarni' that he would accept his first alms from her. He did not flinch even after his family opposed this. He would keep his words in every situation. He was completely away from the feeling of high and low caste, and offered shelter to everyone irrespective of their birth status. We cannot forget the story of Rasik, the sweeper of the temple, he was given shelter by Sri Ramakrishna.

***Sampada tava sripada bhava gopada vari yathay;
Premarpana sama darshana jaga jana dukkha jay.***

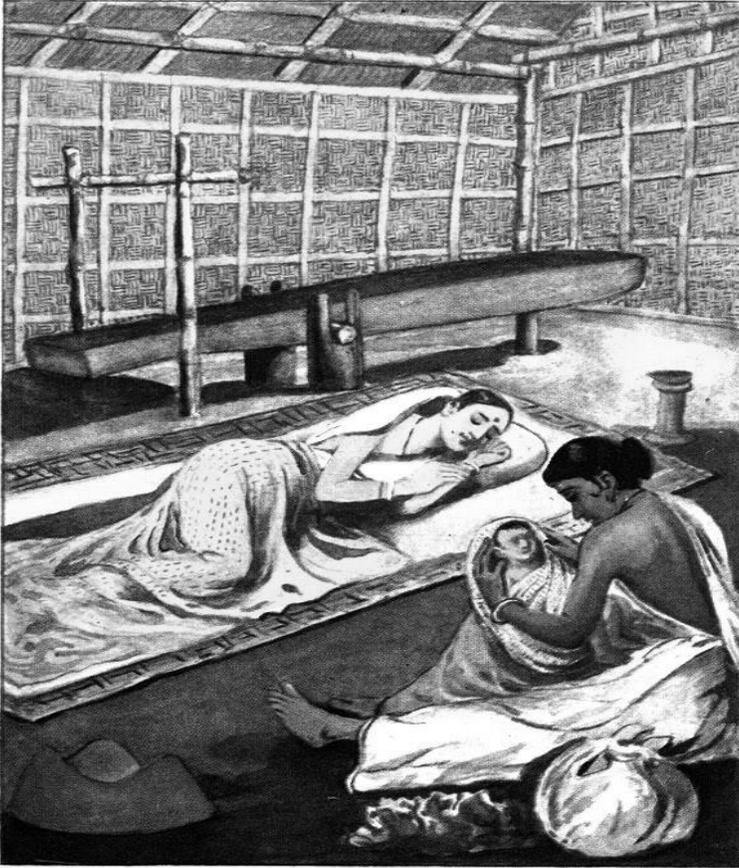
O offering of intense love! O paragon of same-sightedness! To those who treasure Thy holy feet in their hearts, the ocean of Samsara is but a puddle formed by the hoof-mark of a calf! Their sorrows take to wings!

Sri Ramakrishna never asked any devotee about his caste or anything. Even drunkards came to meet him and became devotees. If the devotee was sincere, he was accepted. Sri Krishna says in the Gita- If an extremely bad person comes to me with full devotion and surrenders himself, then treat him as a sadhu or a saint because he has rightly resolved.

Swamiji says about Sri Ramakrishna— You have complete same-sightedness, no partiality in your behaviour. Anyone who follows your teachings with sincerity will see the world as a small puddle. If one treasures His teachings, he or she will never have any sorrow or misery and will be ever happy and blissful.

We must know that here Swamiji prays to Sri Ramakrishna through this vesper song, but he never meant Sri Ramakrishna as a person. Whoever follows Sri Ramakrishna's ideals, even though that person may never take his name, and bows down to his chosen ideal, whoever that ideal may be, with the love and sincerity described in this song, he will achieve his goal. The goal is to forget all differences and love all in the world, irrespective of colour, race, religion or ethnicity. Sri Ramakrishna will always bless us so that we are spiritually uplifted. The purpose of His advent is to help whole humankind experience spiritual unfoldment.

The Birth of Sri Ramakrishna



The blessed hour for which Kshudiram and Chandra were anxiously waiting, at last drew near. On the morning of February 17th, in the year 1836, Chandra told her husband that the time of the delivery was at hand, but the following night was well-nigh passed with the help of Dhani, before she gave birth to a boy. The lying-in room where the august stranger was born was a small hut containing a husking machine and an oven for boiling paddy. It was vernal season and nature had breathed new life into the world after the long winter. Birds with their sweet chirpings and flowers with their delicious perfume heralded the advent of the new Prophet, who with infinite love with one hand and

infinite knowledge in the other, came to deliver his message of hope to suffering humanity.

After giving the necessary assistance to the mother, Dhani turned her attention to the babe, which, to her surprise was not where she had placed it. It had slipped into the adjacent oven and was lying there half-covered with ashes without uttering a cry! She picked up the infant and was astonished to find that it was as large as a child six months old. When the friends heard the glad tidings, there was a great rejoicing, and blasts of conch-shells announced the blessed event to the outside world. Kshudiram, an adept in astrology, found that the infant was born at a most auspicious moment giving promise of a brilliant future. Later some distinguish astrologer studied the time of his birth and said to Kshudiram that the child had been born during an auspicious arrangement of the planets. Astrological science decisively concludes: "Such a person will be profoundly religious, highly respected, and will be always engaged in virtuous deeds. He will live in a temple surrounded by many disciples. He will establish a new religious order. He will be renowned all over the world as a great soul and will be worshipped by the people as a part of Narayana."

SUMMARY OF PAST EVENT

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S BIRTHDAY was celebrated on Sunday, January 18 at 11am. Around 200 devotees attended.

SARASWATI PUJA was celebrated on Sunday, January 25 at 1:30pm.

IMPORTANT EVENTS OF THE MONTH

Shiva Ratri Puja will be celebrated on **Tuesday February 17, 2015 at 6:30pm**. The programme will consist of bhajans, puja and offering of water to Shiva by devotees followed by Prasad distribution.

Sri Ramakrishna Birthday Celebration will be held on **Sunday, February 22, 2015 at 11am**. The programme will include bhajans, reading, puja, homa, flower offering and prasad distribution.

REGULAR PROGRAMMES

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

Devotional singing and meditation is held in the evenings from 6:00 pm to 8:00 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.

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.

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

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**

INTERVIEWS/INSTRUCTION:

Swami Kripamayanda 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.

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.

DAILY MEDITATION: Meditation is observed at the Centre every morning from 6:00 am to 7:00 am.

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

Minister and Teacher - Swami Kripamayananda, Ramakrishna Order of India

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 2015

Sunday	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Friday	Saturday
<u>1</u> <u>11am</u> Lecture: <i>Swami Adbhutananda:</i> <i>A Miracle'</i> VVM 1:30 pm	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture class: <i>'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'</i>	<u>7</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen
<u>8</u> <u>11am</u> Lecture: <i>'Be A Good Listener'</i> VVM 1:30 pm	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen	<u>13</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture class: <i>'Vivekachudamani'</i>	<u>14</u> <u>6am-6pm</u> VIGIL
<u>15</u> <u>11am</u> Lecture: <i>'Sri Ramakrishna as a human being'</i> <i>Ram Nam: 5 pm</i>	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen <u>6:30pm</u> MAHA SHIVA RATRI PUJA	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen	<u>20</u> <i>No Scripture class</i>	<u>21</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen
<u>22</u> <u>11am</u> SRI RAMAKRISHNA BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture class: <i>'Vivekachudamani'</i>	<u>28</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen

This is the message of Sri Ramakrishna to the modern world: "Do not care for doctrines, do not care for dogmas, or sects, or churches, or temples; they count for little compared with the essence of existence in each man which is spirituality; and the more this is developed in a man, the more powerful is he for good. Earn that first, acquire that, and criticize no one, for all doctrines and creeds have some good in them. Show by your lives that religion does not mean words, or names, or sects, but that it means spiritual realization. Only those can understand who have felt. Only those who have attained to spirituality can communicate it to others, can be great teachers of mankind. They alone are the powers of light."

-Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 4, 'My Master'

Please note that the Vedanta Society's email address has been changed to
info@vedantatoronto.ca