



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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WORDS TO INSPIRE

“One cannot realize God without sincerity and simplicity. God is far, far away from the crooked heart.”

---- Sri Ramakrishna

One day Mathur Babu was returning to Janbazar in his deluxe phaeton, bringing Sri Ramakrishna with him. When the carriage reached Chitpur Road the Master had a wonderful vision. He felt that he had become Sita, and that Ravana was kidnapping him. Seized by this idea, he merged into samadhi. Just then the horses tore loose from their reins and stumbled and fell. Mathur Babu could not understand the reason for such a mishap. When Sri Ramakrishna returned to normal consciousness, Mathur told him about the accident with the horses. Sri Ramakrishna then said that while in ecstasy he perceived that Ravana was kidnapping him, and that Jatayu was attacking Ravana's chariot and trying to destroy it. After hearing this story, Mathur Babu said, “Father, how difficult it is even to go with you through the street!”

Sri Ramakrishna was not only a great teacher, but also a great learner. He went to visit the Calcutta Zoo. He said: “I went into samadhi at the sight of the lion, for the carrier of the Mother awakened in my mind the consciousness of the Mother Herself.”

After visiting the Calcutta Museum, he said: “I was shown fossils. A whole animal has become stone! Just see what an effect has been produced by company! Likewise, by constantly living in the company of a holy man one verily becomes holy.”

Ramakrishna described his visit to the studio of Bengal Photographers in Calcutta:

“Today (10 December 1881) I enjoyed very much the machine by which a man's picture is taken. One thing I noticed was that the impression doesn't stay on a bare piece of glass, but it remains when the glass is stained with a black solution. In the same way, mere hearing of spiritual talk doesn't leave any impression. People forget it soon afterwards. But they can retain spiritual instruction if they are stained inside with earnestness and devotion.

Sri Ramakrishna had infinite love and compassion for everyone and everything, even animals. He would go to Calcutta by horse carriage, but he had deep feeling for those horses. The Master did not allow too many passengers in his carriage. The Master would tell devotees who asked for a ride, “No, there is no room in this carriage.” He would ask them to hire a carriage for themselves or to come by boat. He felt that it would be hard for the horses to pull too many people.

Swami Akhandananda wrote in his reminiscences: “The Master would always visit Calcutta by the hired carriage of Beni Pal of Baranagore because his horses were strong and healthy. The Master felt pain if the coachman whipped the horses. He cried out, ‘Uh! Someone is hitting me.’ Beni Pal always supplied his best horses for the carriage that the Master would be riding in. The coachman did not whip the horses; he only made some noise and shook the reins.

From: *How To Live With God*
by Swami Chetanananda – Pp. 283, 287-288

Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and the Harmony of Religions

From Prabuddha Bharata (June 2002), an article by Swami Sandarshananda

In common parlance, secularism appears to imply peaceful coexistence of people of different religious faiths. But it does not indicate anything else otherwise by which one can see how to install peace practically in the midst of a welter of such diverse beliefs.

A firm conviction of this fact drew Sri Ramakrishna to practice almost all the major religions of the world with utmost devotion. After a comprehensive realization of their goals, he proclaimed the harmony of religions to humanity at large. He offered it as a prophylactic against communal as well as sectarian strife, which have possessed the earth for long. In conclusion, Ramakrishna says: God can be realized through all paths. He clarifies his spiritual experience again: It is like water, called in different languages by different names, such as 'jal', 'pani', and so forth.

In the light of his Master's experience, Swami Vivekananda preached the principles of a universal religion which might be acceptable to all and. He made a real impression when he said at the beginning of his 'Raja Yoga': Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free. This is whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.

Ramakrishna and Vivekananda stood for truth. They were not hidebound to any superstition. They absorbed positive ideas from all religions and nourished themselves with their vitality to grow into embodiments of Truth. They were genuine world citizens shorn of reservations inflicted by changing circumstances. Their sense of brotherhood knew no bounds. The harmony of religions propounded by Ramakrishna is not the result of any academic or theoretical exercise. Rather it is an affirmation of its physical assimilation in his own life.

Accordingly, Vivekananda in his first speech at the Parliament of Religions, following his Master's teachings, unequivocally declared: 'We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. These words spontaneously fell from his lips, since he appeared on the stage of the Parliament with a mission. And that mission was to show light to the world. The moment he knew that to serve humanity is to serve God, he realized that man was nothing but God Himself in disguise, and all exterior differences of names and forms dissolved from his vision. He says that he worships the only God whom we ignorantly call man. He thought that his work would not be complete till man realized that he was one with God. With the consummation of harmonization thus achieved, mankind will 'grow into a single family' and man will feel that 'in helping others he helps himself', that 'in hurting others he hurts himself'. Religion to him was 'being and becoming'. In his opinion, 'religion lies in ... realization'.

Vivekananda was worried 'that though there is nothing that has brought to man more blessings than religion, yet at the same time, there is nothing that has brought more horror than religion'. Simultaneously he was pleased that there was tremendous propitious power available in all great religions of the world. The existence of only one faith will be catastrophic because perfect balance means destruction suppressing differentiation, since 'variety is the first principle of life'. So he asks us to be constructive first. Break not, pull not anything down, but build'. He never advanced unnecessary arguments in putting forward his views regarding universal religion. He was sure that 'through high philosophy or low, through the most exalted mythology or the grossest, through the most refined ritualism or arrant fetishism, every sect, every soul, every nation, every religion, consciously or unconsciously, is struggling upward, towards God; every vision of truth that man has, is a vision of Him and none else'. When he interprets religion in such simple language, all confusions vanish from

man's heart and he gets a glimpse of the true meaning of his belief; he is able to realize unity in the purpose of life.

He does not take refuge in any religious creed, for credal jealousy eats into man's rationality and reduces him to a beast. Hence he comes out with the principle of union or yoga. 'To the worker, it is union between men and the whole of humanity; to the mystic, between his lower and Higher Self; to the lover, union between himself and the God of Love; and to the philosopher, it is union of all existence'. Stating this he abrogates the preached exclusiveness of any religion and thereby its tyranny. He makes religion boundlessly broad to accommodate all faiths, notwithstanding the enormous diversity in their traditions. He ascertains 'renunciation and service' as the motive power for dynamism and creativity in religion. A synthetic and congenial religion of its kind is capable of drawing

men closer to one another, infusing a sense of belonging to a single family which had happened with Vivekananda himself.

Although he was a Hindu sannyasin he was nevertheless a perfect internationalist saturated with the universality he inherited from his Master. If Ramakrishna is the cause, Vivekananda is its effect, and cause and effect are essentially one. In an ecstatic mood when Vivekananda says that he is a voice without a form, he removes all doubt and makes a clean breast of the fact that he only airs the message of his Master. Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual tutelage prepared him specifically for the purpose of effecting a global unification with a common spiritual end. Both of them were personifications of the harmony of religions. We had better emulate their examples, throwing aside all varieties in order to attain our highest good.

RENOVATION UPDATE

Building committee includes *Shanker Sanyal, Shanti Ghosh, Jitendra Sheshgiri, Vikas Ojha and Abhijit Bhattacharya*. Advisory board includes *Utpal Banerjee and Anupam Talwar*.

Work completed includes - demolition & disposal of existing interior framing, erecting steel posts, installation of mezzanine floor steel beam, windows installation/brickwork, sewage plumbing completed and inspected by City, layout and framing of interior partitions & elevator shaft, exterior brickwork, window/door, creation and inspection of HVAC platform, purchase of HVAC and vents, purchase of appliances, purchase of Audio-visual products, purchase of security cameras, purchase of 75% of the furniture, purchase of lift, doors and windows, repaired the roof, installation of fire alarm system.

In process work includes: Installation of HVAC ducts and connecting them to the units, interior framing (bulkheads, ceiling), drywall installation/ taping (fire rating, walls, ceilings), exterior doors purchase and installation, cabling for Audio-Visual, Security cameras installation, API-alarm monitoring system, fire alarm system synch with the Alarm monitoring, Burglar alarm system monitoring. Roofing Company has been selected and awarded, roofing likely to be done in May-June 2017.

The renovation project is expected to be completed by end-Feb 2017 and obtaining the Occupancy Certificate from the City may take another month i.e. end-March 2017.

Due to renovation work, all devotees are requested to kindly follow the safety rules and avoid the construction areas. In case of any doubts kindly approach the other members for guidance. Vedanta Society is concerned with the safety of all, but is not responsible for any accidents caused to any occupants during their visit.

Sri Ramakrishna as the spiritual ideal of the modern age

by Swami Bhajananda

Meaning of 'Ideal'

Swamiji regarded Sri Ramakrishna as the ideal for Indians and also for the whole world. How can a person who had only the rudiments of education, who did not know anything about science or technology, and lived like a monk in a God-intoxicated condition in the precincts of a temple be regarded as an ideal for the modern people who idolize film stars, cricket players, politicians, populist leaders, and business magnates? Before answering this question we have to understand what the term 'ideal' really means. An ideal is a symbol of perfection. Through the ideal we gain access to perfection. This means that none of the imperfect individuals of the world can be an ideal for humanity. Perfection cannot be found in the external world, which is ever-changing, full of imperfections, limitations, contradictions, and sufferings. Freedom from bondage to the world and attainment of absolute fearlessness, supreme knowledge, and everlasting joy and peace is what is meant by 'perfection'— *pūrṇata* in Vedānta. There is only one thing that fulfils all the above attributes of perfection, and that is the human's true Self, Atman-Brahman, which is of the nature of pure Consciousness. When a person realizes this ultimate Reality and becomes one with it, 'Brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati; a knower of Brahman becomes Brahman itself.' He then becomes a symbol or personification of Brahman.

The Mundaka Upanishad further states: 'When a person realizes that the whole life (*prāṇa*) is pervaded by the supreme Self, he enjoys the bliss of Atman even while engaged in outer activities. Such a person is the greatest among the knowers of Brahman (*brahmavidāṁ varīṣṭhaḥ*)' (3.1.4). This description perfectly fits Sri Ramakrishna. Such a person alone can be considered to be the Ideal of

humanity. That is why Swami Vivekananda spoke of Sri Ramakrishna as the ideal for the modern world. In the Shankarite Advaita tradition the ideal of a knower of Brahman is the *jīvanmukta*, the liberated-in-life.

The description of a *jīvanmukta* given in Advaitic treatises indicates a person who regards the world as illusory and who moves about unaffected by and unconcerned about the world, somehow exhausting his *prārabdha* karma. Obviously, such a person is not suitable as an ideal for the modern world. Sri Ramakrishna has given a new ideal of a knower of Brahman: the *vijñāni*. As already mentioned, a *vijñāni* is a person who, after the realization of the non-dual Brahman in *nirvikalpa samadhi*, comes back to the world and, seeing the immanent Brahman in all, serves all people looking upon them as God himself. The *vijñāni* does not reject the world as illusory, but lives in the world as a channel for the free flow of God's grace and serves suffering humanity seeing God in everybody.

Sri Ramakrishna himself has made clear the distinction between the *jīvanmukta* and the *vijñāni* in several contexts. On one occasion he said: There are two classes of *paramahamsas*, one affirming the formless Reality and the other affirming God with form. Trailanga Swami believed in the formless Reality. *Paramahamsas* like him care for their own good alone; they feel satisfied if they themselves attain the goal. But those *paramahamsas* who believe in God with form keep the love of God even after attaining the Knowledge of Brahman, so that they may teach spiritual truth to others. ...Some eat mangoes secretly and remove all trace of them by wiping their mouths with a towel. But some share the fruit with others. There are sages who, even after attaining Knowledge, work to help others and also to enjoy the Bliss of God in the company of devotees.

UPCOMING EVENTS CALENDAR

Program detail	Date & Time	Venue Address
Kalpataru Day Celebration	<u>January 1, 2017</u> 10:00 am	Sindhi Gurmandir, 207 Queens Plate Drive, Etobicoke ON M9W 6Z7
Swami Vivekananda's birthday celebration	<u>January 22, 2017</u> 10:00 am	Sindhi Gurmandir, 207 Queens Plate Drive, Etobicoke ON M9W 6Z7

REGULAR PROGRAMMES

SCRIPTURE CLASS: Every Friday at 7:30 pm, following the regular evening prayer at 6:00 pm. *This will be held in the Main Shrine area; entrance will be from the Main Door located on Emmett Avenue.*

VIGIL: There will be no Vigil due to on-going construction at the Centre.

RAM NAM: For the date and time of the monthly Ramnam, please see the 'Calendar of Events' on the next page. *This will be held in the Main Shrine area; entrance will be from the Main Door located on Emmett Avenue.*

BOOK STORE: The Book Store will remain closed during the renovation phase.

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 instructions. Appointments for interviews should be made in advance with the Swami at 416-247262.

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: Daily Bread Food Bank has been suspended for renovation.

SOUP KITCHEN: Due to renovation, the soup is not cooked at the Vedanta Society.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Vedanta Society is closed currently due to renovation, which is expected to be completed around **end March, 2017**. During this period only regular few activities will be conducted. Since this is a construction area, there are restrictions towards moving about inside the temple. Members and Devotees are requested to follow the CAUTION signs inside the temple. Kindly call the following numbers for any further information regarding the Society's activities: 416-240-7262 or 647-990-1418 or 416-569-9401 or 905-799-0023.

Scheduled Regular Activities (please see the calendar on page 6 for details):

Scripture class: Fridays @ 7.30pm after arati;

Sunday Service: Sundays @ 11am;

Ramnam: Once every month

Vigil: Cancelled in this month due to construction.

Vedanta Society of Toronto

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Minister and Teacher - Swami Kripamayananda, Ramakrishna Order of India

January 2017

RENOVATION IN PROGRESS AT VEDANTA SOCIETY

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
<u>1</u> <u>11:00am</u> KALPATARU DAY CELEBRATION	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture Class: 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>7</u>
<u>8</u> NO LECTURE	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture Class: 'Vivekachudamani'	<u>14</u>
<u>15</u> <u>11:00am</u> Lecture: 'Manifestation of Shiva in Jiva'	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>20</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture Class: 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>21</u> NO VIGIL THIS MONTH
<u>22</u> <u>10:00am</u> SWAMI VIVEKANANDA BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION Venue : Sindhi Gurmandir, 207 Queens Plate Drive, Etobicoke	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture Class: 'Vivekachudamani'	<u>28</u>
<u>29</u> <u>11:00am</u> Lecture: 'Glowing Horizon' <u>5:00pm</u> RAMNAM	<u>30</u>	<u>31</u>				

AN APPEAL FOR DONATION – ASHRAMA RENOVATION

Vedanta Society is currently executing the Phase-2 Renovation Project, which is estimated to cost \$1.4M. Members and Devotees are requested to come forward and donate generously for this purpose. The proposed Phase-2 includes : Prayer hall expansion, relocate the stairs for fire safety enhancement, Mezzanine floor expansion, Increased number of washrooms, New Lift for elder & physically challenged devotees, new flower room, new book store, new guest rooms for visiting Swamis, more multi-purpose meeting rooms (Vidya Mandir, spiritual discussions, library), Energy efficient kitchens with better equipment and washing facilities, Energy efficient lighting, better heating-cooling & ventilation, better security and safety (CCTV cameras, alarms) and better audio-visual facility.