



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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Newsletter March 2016

WORDS TO INSPIRE

“To me, the Master is God- an avatar. One word of His has transformed my life completely. It is not difficult to obey, to love, or to worship him; it is extremely difficult to forget him.”

-Girish Chandra Ghosh

The Holy Mother saw the Master many times after his passing away. On her way to Vrindaban for pilgrimage, she had a vision of the Master. She was in the habit of wearing Sri Ramakrishna's gold amulet on her arm. This amulet had been given to him to allay the burning sensation of his body when he practised intense spiritual disciplines at Dakshineswar. In her train compartment she lay down with her arm on the windowsill, leaving the amulet exposed. The Master suddenly appeared and, looking at her through the window, said: “Why are you keeping the amulet that way? You may lose it.” After that vision she took it off and kept it in a tin box with the Master's photograph. It was in Vrindaban that the Master appeared to the Holy Mother, asking her to initiate Swami Yogananda. Ramakrishna appeared not only to the Holy Mother and his monastic disciples but also to some of his householder devotees. After the Master passed away on 16 August 1886, at the Cossipore garden house, some of his young disciples had to return to their homes against their wishes, while others had no place to go. They were like orphans. One evening early in September, while Surendra was meditating in his shrine, Sri Ramakrishna appeared to him and said: “What are you doing here? My boys are roaming about without a place to live. Attend to that before anything else.” Surendra immediately rushed to Swami Vivekananda's house and said to some of the disciples: “Brothers, where will

you go? Let us rent a house. You will live there and make it our Master's shrine; and we householders will come there for consolation. How can we pass all our days and nights in this world, with our wives and children? I use to spend a sum of money for the Master at Cossipore. I shall gladly give it now for your expenses.” Purna Chandra Ghosh was suffering from tuberculosis and remained bedridden for about six months before passing away. He calmly endured his physical pain and suffering without any complaint. If anyone came to comfort him, he would cheerfully say: “My Master, Sri Ramakrishna, is always seated at my bedside. I have no fear or worry.” As the days passed, Purna's body became emaciated, and he was not allowed to leave his bed because of his extreme weakness. One night, finding that everyone was fast asleep, he went to the bathroom alone. It was his nature not to trouble anyone about himself. While returning to bed he became dizzy and nearly fell. The next day he told a close devotee: “Who says that the Master does not exist? He is still living, and I perceive him clearly. Last night, while returning from the bathroom, I was about to fall unconscious. The Master caught me in his arms and carried me to the bed. He is there, just as he was before, and I can see him.

(From the book *“How to live with God”* by Swami Chetanananda)

Glimpses of Sri Ramakrishna

(Based on a talk by Swami Kripamayanda at the Vedanta Society on March 15, 2009)

The devotees of Sri Ramakrishna consider him as an incarnation of the Supreme Being or an Avataar. Let us first think deeply on the concept of incarnation. We all know that Sri Krishna said to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita – Whenever Dharma (virtue) subsides and wickedness prevails, I manifest Myself to establish virtue, to destroy evil, to save the good. I incarnate myself from Yuga (age) to Yuga (age). Let us try to understand this in the concept of God in human form. It is said in the Hindu philosophy that an ordinary Jiva has to go through many births based on the karma-phala (effects of the karmas), and it evolves continuously passing from lower stage to the higher stage, till it gets the human birth. So human birth is the most precious of all births, the jiva gets a chance to liberate itself from the cycle of birth and death in this human life. So, what is the difference between an incarnation of God and an ordinary jiva? An incarnation of God or the Supreme Being does not take birth due to any karmas, since God is not touched by the karma, he is above its divine power-Maya. Maya creates the universe and arranges the play for the jivas. Sri Krishna said in the Gita– Maya is my own divine power and it is extremely difficult to overcome the binding influence of Maya. Per chance only one or two in thousands get liberated. Then how and why does God take birth as a human? There is a balance of good and evil tendencies in the social structure. Whenever this balance gets disturbed, to set it right, the Supreme Being by His own will, gets entangled in the web of its own divine power Maya and comes down on the earth as an incarnation. Again questions may arise in our minds that there are so many great acts conducted by many great persons in the world. Our history is full of these great people whose names have been carved in letters of gold and have become immortal. Can we not call them as incarnations and what is the difference between these people and the incarnations of God? We must understand that these people have no doubt conducted some great virtuous work, but if analyzed, we may find that their work has temporarily uplifted or saved the world, but the effect does not carry over generations. Also the effects are realized during their lifetime more than after few generations. Their recognition fades away with the passage of time. But in case of incarnations, it is the opposite. Preaching

conducted by Jesus did not find that much importance during his lifetime, than was found much later, after his passing away. Today when we read His teachings we find great relevance and bliss and they help to uplift our lives in spiritual sense. Sri Ramakrishna said-‘The incarnations are like big ship passing on the river. The effects of the waves on the banks are felt, a long time after it has passed. During their lifetime, very few people can recognize them. Rama was recognized as an incarnation, only by twelve Rishis. All others thought that Rama was the son of Dasharatha, the King of Ayodhya. Let us now visualize few incidents of Sri Ramakrishna’s life and feel blessed.

As a small boy, Gadai (Sri Ramakrishna’s childhood name) had experienced his first Samadhi on visualizing the white cranes against black clouds. Then again when he was bedecked with the guise of Shiva to participate in the jatra play on Shivaratri night in his village, he became completely immersed in the thought of Shiva and lost his consciousness for three days. Gadai was a staunch follower of Truth in thoughts, words and deed. This was proven by this incident. He had once playfully promised his nanny-Dhani Kamarani, who belonged to a lower caste, that he will accept his first alms from her during his thread ceremony. When his thread ceremony was performed, he went to her for his first alms. During that period, in India, Brahmins were not allowed to accept anything from the lower caste. When the Brahmin community including his eldest brother opposed his action, Gadai explained quoting scriptures, if he is not allowed to that his words given to Dhani will be false and a person speaking lie was not fit to be a Brahmin. This argument had to be accepted by the community and he was allowed to accept first alms from Dhani, as per his promise. Sri Ramakrishna always said- ‘In Kaliyuga, the person who speaks truth, always sits on the lap of God.’ This proves that an incarnation never opposes the scriptures, but follows them to the word. When he came to Dakshineswar with his eldest brother, he got job in the temple. Later he was asked to worship the image of Mother Kali. An ordinary priest would have just performed the ritualistic worship and remained happy with the earnings. But Sri Ramakrishna wanted to confirm himself, whether

there really was Divine Mother in the stone image or it was just a hearsay. So he decided to call on the Mother as a little child calls on his mother. No show business, it was the most earnest call of a child for his mother. He cried his heart out to have her vision and finally the Divine Mother appeared before him. This proves that God loves simple people and he was the simplest of all, no ego at all.

Sri Ramakrishna loved his mother very dearly and did everything to keep her happy and always kept her near him to look after all her needs.

No incarnation has respected woman so much as Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna saw the Divine Mother in his own wife and respected her as such. In fact, Sri Ramakrishna worshipped Sarada Devi, as Divine Mother and offered the fruits of his austerities at her feet. He acknowledged her divinity and knew that she will do much more to spiritually uplift the humanity.

Sri Ramakrishna always emphasized that 'the speech, actions and the thoughts of the mind must be identical and not contradictory'. One night Swami Yogananda, one of his disciples, was sleeping outside his room, when he heard the Master go out. Immediately a doubt arose in his mind, if the Master was really practicing what he preached— to renounce 'Woman (lust) and Gold (greed)'. He went near the Nahabat building where Holy Mother lived to see if the Master visited his wife at night. In the meantime, he heard Sri Ramakrishna returning from the pine grove after finishing nature's call, and he felt ashamed of doubting the Master. Sri Ramakrishna could read his mind's thoughts and appreciated that his disciple had the courage to test him. He always encouraged his disciples to test him in all respects and only after fully convinced, they can accept Him. Sri Ramakrishna used to say-'I am not able to touch any metal'. His most favourite disciple Narendra later Swami Vivekananda decided to test him. Once he put coin under his bed when the Master was away. When Sri Ramakrishna came back and sat on the bed, he jumped up as if bitten by a scorpion, and then found out Naren's mischief. Sri Ramakrishna said-'Once I took money in one hand and clay in the other. Then I threw them both in the Ganga saying- Money and clay are same.' Once Sri Ramakrishna saw a big carriage coming towards his room and a rich man getting down from it. He immediately hid

himself. The rich man wanted to offer Sri Ramakrishna a big amount and the Master wanted to avoid that. After the rich man left, the Master came out of hiding. His nephew Hriday scolded him that they lost a great deal of money because of the Master not meeting the rich man. But the Master had no inclination towards money at all. Once Mahendra Kaviraj of Sinthi gave Ramlal, Sri Ramakrishna's nephew, five rupees to pay for his milk. Sri Ramakrishna did not know about this. Suddenly he felt great pain in his chest. He woke up at night and asked Ramlal if he had received anything. When Ramlal said about the money he had received, Sri Ramakrishna told him to return it back immediately. This indicates that Sri Ramakrishna was completely free from 'woman and gold'.

Holy Mother was once asked by one of her disciples, what was the most important objective of the advent of Sri Ramakrishna. Holy Mother said- It was to teach humanity how to practice humility and renunciation. Sri Ramakrishna used to go into Samadhi at his will. In fact, Divine Mother had herself commanded him to remain in 'Bhava-mukha' or 'on the threshold of worldly consciousness and Supreme consciousness'. Towards the end of his life, the Master suffered from throat cancer. Dr. Sarkar, the doctor who was treating him, suggested that he should avoid going into frequent Samadhi. Once when the Master was in Samadhi, doctor touched Sri Ramakrishna's eye-ball and found no sensation in him. He could also not find his heartbeats. Master was not feigning Samadhi but actually used to be immersed in bliss totally unaware of the world and even of his body consciousness.

Finally a few days before Sri Ramakrishna entered into Maha-Samadhi, Narendra was thinking whether he was a real incarnation. If he was so, he should have the awareness of his Divinity at the time of this acute pain. Immediately the Master said to Narendra, "One who came as Rama and then as Krishna, is born in this body as Ramakrishna." This declaration finally stamped the authenticity of the Master being an incarnation of God. This time the Supreme Being decided to incarnate in human body full of sattva, there was no ego in him. Swami Vivekananda describes Sri Ramakrishna as "L-O-V-E". Truly Sri Ramakrishna was embodiment of LOVE.

Nagmahashaya– a saintly householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna

Whenever Nagmahashaya went to Calcutta, he went to meet Girish Ghosh, another householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. He used to say, “If one keeps association with Girish Babu even for five minutes, one gets freed from worldly delusions. He is such a perfect sage. He has such a keen insight that he can see at a glance the innermost recesses of a man’s heart; and with such an insight he was the first to recognize the Master as the incarnation of the Most High.” He would profoundly bow down his head at the very mention of Girish Babu’s name. Once while Nagmahashaya came to Calcutta to make purchases for the Durga puja, he went to Girish Babu’s house. Seeing him coming, Girish Babu came down from upstairs and conducted him very warmly to a room in the first-floor of his house. Next Girish Babu requested him to speak something about Sri Ramakrishna. Nagmahashaya said, “Ignorant and worthless as I am, how can I understand Him? Bless me that I may attain devotion to the lotus feet of the lord.” Humility was writ large on his face. All present looked at him with silent amazement. Girish Babu remarked, “That is why I regard our Master as the incarnation of God. He whose grace can bring about such a change, can mould the mind of a man into such a state, can He be other than God? He must indeed be a super-human.”

One Sunday Nagmahashaya went to see the Holy Mother in the garden-house of Nilambar Babu, at Belur. He bought some sweetmeats and a piece of red-bordered cloth for the Mother and was crying like a child, “Mother, Mother.” When Nagmahashaya landed at the Ganga ghat at Belur, he was so full of emotion that he began to quiver as a leaf before a strong wind. Swami Premananda had seen him from a distance and had already informed the Mother. They caught hold of Nagmahashaya, whose frame was about to give way in ecstasy and emotion, and led him slowly to the Mother’s presence. After the lapse of about half hour they came out, Nagmahashaya, still not fully in the plane of normal consciousness. He was saying, “Mother is always more merciful than the Father.” Swami Premananda said, “Oh! How the Mother bestowed her grace upon Nagmahashaya today! She partook of the sweets

brought by Nagmahashaya and then gave him as Prasadam with her own hands.”

Receiving the news of Swamiji’s arrival from America, Nagmahashaya came to Calcutta to see him at Belur Math. He reached there in the afternoon and fell prostrate before Swamiji. When he heard that Swamiji was not keeping well, he showed his anxiety and said, “Thakur used to say that you the chest of gold mohurs. The preservation of your health will save the world from misery. The world hangs on you.” Swamiji then ordered that the scripture class to be closed that day, in honour of Nagmahashaya; and all the Brahmacharins and Sannyasins came there and sat before Nagmahashaya and Swamiji. As soon as Swamiji uttered the name of Sri Ramakrishna, Nagmahashaya stood up and shouted, “Glory to Sri Ramakrishna!” On Swamiji’s asking him whether it was proper to establish Maths and build temples, Nagmahashaya answered, “All these are accomplished at the will of the Lord and they are for the good of the world and its beings.” Then Swamiji said to all present, “Only by seeing Nagmahashaya one can understand to what spiritual height a man can attain through the grace of the Lord. In self-control and renunciation he is by far our superior.” Before taking leave, Nagmahashaya prostrated before Swamiji with the words, “Hail Shiva Sankara!” Swamiji raised him by the hand and said, “Please do come and bless us with your holy presence every now and then.”

Once Nagmahashaya went to late Balaram Basu’s house in Baghbazar. Balaram Basu was a great devotee of Sri Ramakrishna and the Master had visited his house more than 100 times. Swamis Brahmananda and Premananda were present there on that day. On seeing Nagmahashaya, they stopped all other talks and began to talk about Sri Ramakrishna. When they were about to return home, Swami Brahmananda said, “The moment Nagmahashaya entered here, we were unconsciously reminded about the Master and all other discussions stopped. It is due to the appearance of such great souls that spirituality is still present in India. Blessed indeed is Nagmahashaya.”

IMPORTANT EVENTS OF THIS MONTH

MAHASHIVARATRI will be celebrated on **Monday, March 7, 2016 at 6:30pm**. The programme will consist of devotional songs, chanting of hymns, puja and offering of abhishekam to Lord Shiva. **SRI RAMAKRISHNA BIRTHDAY** will be celebrated on **Sunday, March 13, 2016 at 11am**. The programme will consist of devotional songs, puja, homa and offering of flowers.

UPCOMING EVENTS

RAM NAVAMI will be celebrated on Friday, April 15 at 6:30 pm.

REGULAR PROGRAMMES

SCRIPTURE CLASS: Every Friday at 7:30 pm, Devotional singing and meditation time in the evenings following the regular evening prayer at 6:00 pm. is from 6:00 pm to 7:30 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 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.

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

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 Neighborhood & 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 programs, 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.

AN APPEAL FOR DONATION – ASHRAMA RENOVATION

Vedanta Society plans to start the Phase-2 Renovation Project in May 2016, 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 by which all the devotees in the building will be able to enjoy the event.

Vedanta Society of Toronto

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Minister and Teacher - Swami Kripamayanda, Ramakrishna Order of India

March 2016

Sunday	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Friday	Saturday
		<u>1</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u> Scripture class: 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>5</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen
<u>6</u> 11am Lecture: 'OM, the Supreme'	<u>7</u> 6:30pm MAHA SHIVARATRI	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>11</u> 7:30pm Special Event: 'Chinmaya Jyoti'	<u>12</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen
<u>1:30 pm</u> VVM						
<u>13</u> 11am SRI RAMAKRISHNA BIRTHDAY	<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 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>19</u> 6am to 6pm Vigil
<u>20</u> 11am Lecture: 'Significance of Good Friday and Easter'	<u>21</u>	<u>22</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>25</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: 'Vivekachudamani'	<u>26</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen
<u>1:30 pm</u> VVM						
<u>27</u> 11am Lecture: 'Holy Mother's First Disciple'	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>30</u>	<u>31</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen by Patanjali Yoga group		
5:00pm RAM NAAM						

Tax Receipts are all mailed. If you have not received it, kindly let us know, we will send you the duplicate copy. If there is any discrepancy in the tax receipt, please let us know asap, so that we can rectify and send you the receipt by return mail. Regarding tax receipts, please contact us by email or by phone.