



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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Newsletter May 2017

Words to Inspire

"The impurity of the mind is destroyed through the performance of duty. It is like getting rid of a disease by means of medicine under the instruction of a competent physician."
-- Sri Ramakrishna

The love of the Avatara is not bound by considerations of caste, religion or race; it is boundless and extends to the whole humanity. We can see the manifestation of this universal divine love in Sri Ramakrishna's life.

Another aspect of the Avatara's love is compassion. In the scriptures, both Hindu and Christian, it is stated that it is out of compassion for suffering humanity that God incarnates himself on the earth. Swami Abhedananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, states in his well-known salutation-verse: "Although stainless, eternal and infinite in your real nature, you assumed the human body out of compassion for devotees..."

In this context Sri Ramakrishna's disapproval of the attitude of compassion needs to be clarified. One day Sri Ramakrishna was explaining Sri Chaitanya's instruction to his disciple Sanatana Goswamin: "There is no duty greater than taking delight in uttering the Lord's Name, compassion for human beings, and service to Vaishnavas." While explaining this, Sri Ramakrishna entered a state of trance and remarked: "Compassion to human beings! Fool, who are you, an insignificant creature, to show compassion to them? No, no, not compassion but service to them, looking upon them as God Himself." Swami Vivekananda, who was present on that occasion, later on stated that it was this remark of his Master that gave him the idea that social service should be undertaken not out of compassion but as service to God. Here it is obvious that by

condemning "compassion" Sri Ramakrishna did not mean that one should not have kindness or sympathy for others. In that case service would be nothing more than an insincere, heartless ritual. As Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi used to say, "A person without kindness, can he be regarded as a human being?" What Sri Ramakrishna meant was that "compassion" is a higher type of virtue, a divine attribute, which only an illumined and liberated person who has developed universal love can have. A person who lives in ignorance, bondage and suffering, and himself deserves pity, how can such a person show compassion to others? A more modest attitude for such a person would be to have sympathy or, better still, empathy for others.

Empathy (sahanubhuti) is the ability to place oneself in another man's place and feel his sorrow as one's own. Suffering people should be treated with respect, and not as objects of pity. The best way to show respect is to recognize the Divinity inherent in the soul of everyone, and to regard service to man as service to God. This was what Sri Ramakrishna taught as siva jnane jiva seva, "To serve jiva as Shiva." Such an attitude gives dignity to the beneficiary and transforms ordinary service into worship and a spiritual practice.

From the book '*The Light of the Modern World*'
(The Universal Significance of Sri Ramakrishna's
Avatarhood and Message by Sw Bhajananda- Pp 90-92)

IMPORTANT NOTE

The renovation at Vedanta Society is expected to be completed and Occupancy certificate obtained shortly. Devotees are requested to kindly volunteer and participate in cleanup and arranging the furniture, etc. so that normal activities can begin at earliest. 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. Till the Occupancy Certificate is obtained, all devotees and visitors are requested to follow all CAUTION signs. Vedanta Society of Toronto is not responsible for any injury caused to anybody in the premises.

From Mortality to Immortality

(Excerpted from the article by Swami Satprakashananda, Vedanta for the West)

There is no denying that man is mortal. Not only is he subject to death, but each and every living thing must die. In this world of uncertainties, death is the only settled fact. No one knows how death will come, nor where, nor when. Death has no regard for anything in this universe. No position, be it intellectual, physical, moral, or even spiritual is immune from it. Yet, the human mind refuses to accept death as something final, and we find the sages of the world declaring that death of the body is not the end of an individual's existence.

The physical body dies and disintegrates, but the spirit that passes out of the body continues to exist. As long as a man is considered as only a physical being, death will be thought to end him; but man is not just a physical or psychophysical being, he is a spiritual entity. If death were the end of existence, then our sense of justice is frustrated, our labour is unrewarded, and our desires and aspirations are unrealized. Human reason, human feeling cannot accept death as final. Why should mortal man have such a deep-seated yearning for immortality? There must be some explanation for it. In every case of perception there are two distinct factors. One is the object of perception, the other is the perceiver. What is the difference between the object of perception and the perceiver? We must remember that the existence of an object always presupposes the existence of a perceiver. It is the perceiver who establishes the reality of the object perceived. But we ignore the perceiver and accept the objective universe as real in itself, forgetting the necessity for a subject in order that an object can exist. The one fundamental difference between the object perceived and the perceiver is this: the perceiver is self-aware. The object has no inherent consciousness.

Similarly, Vedanta says that this distinction between the object and the subject holds good with regard to the human personality as well. Just as an external object is perceived, so is this physical body an object of perception. An individual knows himself to be either dark or fair, sick or healthy, or whether his body is growing or decaying. The body is an object of perception, and so is the mind an object of perception. Just as one can watch external events, so can one watch the movements of the mind.

The spirit is always there whether the object is there or not. This whole universe, for instance, drops from your consciousness when you dream. There is an altogether different order of perceived objects and perceived facts

in the dream state. Yet, the same perceiver is persistently there; but the objects perceived are changing. When deep sleep is experienced, there is no feeling, no memory, no thought; still, the perceiver is there. The same experiencer says, "I slept, I did not know anything. I dreamt, I slept, I awoke." This means that all the objects of perception belonging to this physical body and the mind are changing, but the perceiver is enduring and changeless. The external objects change, the body changes, the senses change, the mind changes, but the perceiver is constant. This is the one factor that never changes. It reveals your dream state, your sleep state, and waking state, but is separate from all of these.

So through reasoning one can become convinced that a person is not only distinct from external objects, but separate from his own physical body and ever-changing mind. While the external objects—the body, senses, and mind—are bereft of consciousness, one always has consciousness within him. This is the same in sleep, in dream, or in the waking state, and this consciousness maintains our identity. Our body may change, our thoughts and ideas be revolutionized; still, we say that we are the same. What maintains our individuality? Underlying all these changing factors, there is a perceiver which is of the nature of Pure Consciousness. That Self is pure, luminous, constant, changeless, and blissful. This is its nature, and it is ever-present.

Yet, just as fire is covered with smoke, this spirit is covered with a kind of ignorance. An individual fails to realize his true nature as pure spirit. He not only fails to do this, but he identifies himself with this body-mind and thus becomes young or old, healthy or sick, ignorant or wise, simply through the identification of the pure spirit with this body, and psychophysical system. As long as he does this he cannot be immortal in the true sense. For example, a person may have some money in his purse, but if he is not aware of it he may as well be poor. Similarly, so long as a person does not realize his real self as being pure spirit, he will remain mortal. It is said in the Upanishads that like corn, human beings die and decay. After death, a person may have another body, but he will die again. Why do people die? Because they are born. Anything that has a beginning, anything that is born, must die. This is an inevitable truth.

A person can attain immortality even while living by realizing his identity with the immortal spirit and the fact that this spirit is separate from the body. There have been sages and seers who have realized the immortal spirit, and they defied death. If an individual fails to realize the immortality of the spirit, he is mortal. Realization of our eternal nature can be effected in two ways. First reasoning about it; second, meditating upon this truth and thus attaining the realization of God. In Vedanta, God realization and Self-realization are not distinct. In trying to realize your spiritual Self, you realize God, because God is the Soul of your soul. Sri Ramakrishna remarked, if a person can know himself in the true sense, he will know God. There is a kinship between the human Spirit and the divine Spirit, and when an individual realizes the true nature of his conscious Self, he realizes that he belongs to the supreme Spirit. Just as each and every wave belongs to the ocean, and each and every ray of the sun belongs to the sun, similarly, each and every soul belongs to God or the Infinite Soul. We read in the Upanishads: "This form [the form of the Supreme Spirit] does not stand within the range of sense-perception. No one perceives Him with the eye; those who know him through intuition, that mystical awareness, as seated in the heart, become immortal. He lies hidden; Him the cosmic being knows as the source of Himself; those Gods and Seers who realized Him became identified with Him, and verily became immortal."

When one approaches the Supreme Being with devotion and worships him, the mind will become purified. Then

one will realize his spiritual nature and eventually realize his Self and his essential unity with Divinity. That Supreme Spirit can be contacted through one's own inner spirit. Whether one tries to realize the Self as distinct from the body, the senses, and the mind; or whether one gradually becomes aware of the true nature of the Self, it is Spirit that contacts Spirit. Each and every kind of perception has its own instrument. For the perception of physical forms there are the eyes; for the perception of sounds there are ears; for the perception of mental ideas, there is the mind. Similarly, for the experience of pure spirit there is the spiritual Self. As one becomes aware of the spiritual Self within, God comes closer and closer as the Soul of one's soul, and ultimately one realizes his essential oneness with him. We read in the Bhagavad Gita: "This Self is never born, nor does it die. It is not that having been it again ceases to be. Even as a man casts out worn-out clothes, and puts on others which are new, so the embodied self casts out worn-out bodies, and enters into others which are new."

"This Self weapons cut not, fire burns not, water wets not, wind dries not. This Self cannot be cut, nor burnt, nor wetted, nor dried; changeless, all-pervading, unmoving, unmoved, the Self is eternal."

The difference between mortality and immortality, the difference between death and deathlessness is to realize that man's pure Spirit is deathless and immortal, self-luminous

consciousness, ever pure, and free, and one with the Supreme Spirit.

BUILDING 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 Remaining:

Main entrance & Side entrance, Stairs carpet, Elevator inspection, Roofing, Awning, Signage, Fire & Building inspection.

We are trying to obtain the Occupancy Certificate from the City at earliest possible.

Safety Norms:

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.

ON LORD BUDDHA

(Excerpted from 'Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda'-Vol-4, lecture delivered in Detroit, USA)

In every religion we find one type of self-devotion particularly developed. The type of working without a motive is most highly developed in Buddhism. Do not mistake Buddhism and Brâhminism. In this country you are very apt to do so. Buddhism is one of our sects. It was founded by a great man called Gautama, who became disgusted at the eternal metaphysical discussions of his day, and the cumbrous rituals, and more especially with the caste system. Some people say that we are born to a certain state, and therefore we are superior to others who are not thus born. He was also against the tremendous priestcraft. He preached a religion in which there was no motive power, and was perfectly agnostic about metaphysics or theories about God. He was often asked if there was a God, and he answered, he did not know. When asked about right conduct, he would reply, "Do good and be good." There came five Brâhmins, who asked him to settle their discussion. One said, "Sir, my book says that God is such and such, and that this is the way to come to God." Another said, "That is wrong, for my book says such and such, and this is the way to come to God"; and so the others. He listened calmly to all of them, and then asked them one by one, "Does any one of your books say that God becomes angry, that He ever injures anyone, that He is impure?" "No, Sir, they all teach that God is pure and good." "Then, my friends, why do you not become pure and good first, that you may know what God is?"

He was the only man who was bereft of all motive power. There were other great men who all said they were the Incarnations of God Himself, and that those who would believe in them would go to heaven. But what did Buddha

say with his dying breath? "None can help you; help yourself; work out your own salvation." He said about himself, "Buddha is the name of infinite knowledge, infinite as the sky; I, Gautama, have reached that state; you will all reach that too if you struggle for it." Bereft of all motive power, he did not want to go to heaven, did not want money; he gave up his throne and everything else and went about begging his bread through the streets of India, preaching for the good of men and animals with a heart as wide as the ocean.

He was the only man who was ever ready to give up his life for animals to stop a sacrifice. He once said to a king, "If the sacrifice of a lamb helps you to go to heaven, sacrificing a man will help you better; so sacrifice me." The king was astonished. And yet this man was without any motive power. He stands as the perfection of the active type, and the very height to which he attained shows that through the power of work we can also attain to the highest spirituality.

To many the path becomes easier if they believe in God. But the life of Buddha shows that even a man who does not believe in God, has no metaphysics, belongs to no sect, and does not go to any church, or temple, and is a confessed materialist, even he can attain to the highest. We have no right to judge him. I wish I had one infinitesimal part of Buddha's heart. Buddha may or may not have believed in God; that does not matter to me. He reached the same state of perfection to which others come by Bhakti — love of God — Yoga, or Jnâna. Perfection does not come from belief or faith. Talk does not count for anything. Parrots can do that. Perfection comes through the disinterested performance of action.

FINANCIAL UPDATE-BUILDING RENOVATION

Total Estimated Project Cost :		\$1,400,000	
General Contractor	Paid till date	\$ 870,000	
	Balance		\$ 240,000
Other Payments	Paid till date	\$ 180,000	
	Balance		\$ 110,000
Total		\$ 1,050,000	\$ 350,000

Balance to complete the project is \$350,000, to be paid by end of June, 2017. Current funds available (including interest free loans) \$350,000.

Current interest free loans balance is \$167,000.

AN APPEAL FOR DONATION

Vedanta Society appeals to the devotees and well-wishers to kindly come forward and donate generously, so that we can pay-off all loans and build up funds to secure ourselves for our regular operations. The financial details and loan requirements are provided above.

UPCOMING EVENTS CALENDAR

Program detail	Date & Time	Venue Address
Annual Retreat by Rev. Swami Sumanasananda of the Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa, Durban	<u>June 17 & 18, 2017</u> 6:00 am to 5:00 pm	Vedanta Society of Toronto
Guru Purnima	<u>July 9, 2017</u> 11:00 am	Vedanta Society of Toronto

REGULAR PROGRAMMES

SCRIPTURE CLASS: Friday Scripture Classes begin at 7:30 pm, following the regular evening prayer at 6:00 pm. The class, held at the centre, is open to all interested persons.

VIGIL: A vigil consisting of japa and meditation will be observed, from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm, for date kindly see 'Calendar of Events', on next page. To participate, please call the centre at 416-240-7262.

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

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

DAILY BREAD FOOD BANK: Daily Bread Food Bank has been suspended for renovation.

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 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.

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

The eight Buddhist practices in the Noble Eightfold Path are:

Right View: our actions have consequences; death is not the end, and our actions and beliefs have also consequences after death;

Right Resolve: the giving up home and adopting the life of a religious mendicant in order to follow the path;

Right Speech: no lying, no rude speech, no telling one person what another says about him, speaking that which leads to salvation;

Right Conduct: no killing or injuring, no taking what is not given, no sexual acts;

Right Livelihood: beg to feed, only possessing what is essential to sustain life;

Right Effort: guard against sensual thoughts;

Right Mindfulness: never be absent minded, being conscious of what one is doing;

Right samadhi: practicing four stages of meditation (dhyāna) culminating into unification of the mind.

Vedanta Society of Toronto

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Minister and Teacher - Swami Kripamayananda, Ramakrishna Order of India

May 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u> 7:30pm Scripture Class: 'Vivekachudamani'	<u>6</u>
<u>7</u> 11:00am Lecture: 'Buddha and His Teachings' 5:00pm RamNam	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u> 7:30pm Scripture Class: 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>13</u>
<u>14</u> 11:00am Buddha Jayanti Celebration	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u> 7:30pm Scripture Class: 'Vivekachudamani'	<u>20</u> 6:00am to 6:00pm VIGIL
<u>21</u> 11:00am Lecture: 'Be Illumined' by Prof. V Kumar Murty	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>27</u> 10:00am Vivekananda Public Speaking competition
<u>28</u> 11:00am Lecture: 'Hurry for Hari'	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>31</u>			