



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

120 Emmett Ave. Toronto, ON M6M 2E6 CANADA

Tel.: 416-240-7262 Email: info@vedantatoronto.ca Website: www.vedantatoronto.ca

Newsletter November 2016

WORDS TO INSPIRE

“The effect of karma wears away if one takes refuge in God. I prayed to the Divine Mother with a flower in my hand: ‘Here, Mother, take Thy sin; here, take Thy virtue. I don’t want either of these; give me only real bhakti. Here, Mother, take Thy dharma; here, take Thy adharma. I don’t want any of Thy dharma or adharma; give me only real bhakti. Here, Mother, take Thy knowledge; here, take Thy ignorance. I don’t want any of Thy knowledge or ignorance; give me only real bhakti. Here, Mother, take Thy purity; here, take Thy impurity. Give me only real bhakti.’”

---- Sri Ramakrishna

Mother Has Revealed Everything To Me

I wept before the Mother and prayed. “O Mother, please tell me, please reveal to me what the yogis have realized through yoga and the jnanis through discrimination.” And the Mother has revealed everything to me. She reveals everything if the devotee cries to Her with a yearning heart. She has shown me everything that is in the Vedas, the Vedanta, the Puranas, and the Tantra.”

The Divine Mother revealed to me in the Kali temple that it was She who had become everything. She showed me that everything was full of Consciousness. The image was Consciousness, the water was Consciousness, the altar was Consciousness, the water vessels were Consciousness, the doorsill was Consciousness, the marble floor was Consciousness—all was Consciousness.

I found everything inside the room soaked, as if were, in Bliss – the Bliss of Satchidananda. I saw a wicked man in front of the Kali temple, but in him also I saw the Power of the Divine Mother vibrating.

That was why I fed a cat with the food that was to be offered to the Divine Mother. I clearly perceived that the Divine Mother Herself had become everything – even the cat. The manager of the temple garden wrote to Mathur Babu saying that I was feeding the cat with the offering intended for the Divine Mother. But Mathur Babu had insight into the state of my mind. He wrote back to the manager: “Let him do whatever he likes. You must not say anything to him.

To my Divine Mother I prayed only for pure love. I offered flowers at Her Lotus Feet and prayed to Her: “Mother, here is Thy virtue, here it Thy vice. Take them both and grant me only pure love for Thee. Here

is Thy knowledge, here is Thy ignorance, take them both and grant me only pure love for Thee. Here is Thy purity, here is Thy impurity. Take them both, Mother, and grant me only pure love for Thee. Here is Thy dharma, here is Thy adharma. Take them both, Mother, and grant me only pure love for Thee.”

You see Her as black because you are far away from Her. Go near and you will find Her devoid of all color. The water of a lake appears black from a distance. Go near and take the water in your hand, and you will see that it has no color at all. Similarly, the sky looks blue from a distance. But look at the atmosphere near you; it has no color. The nearer you come to God, the more you will realize that He has neither name nor form. If you move away from the Divine Mother, you will find Her blue, like the grass-flower. Is Shyama male or female? A man once saw the image of the Divine Mother wearing a sacred thread. He said to the worshipper: “What? You have put the sacred thread around the Mother’s neck!” The worshipper said: “Brother, I see that you have truly known the Mother. But I have not yet been able to find out whether She is male or female; that is why I have put the sacred thread on Her image.”

That which is Shyama is also Brahman. That which has form, again, is without form. That which has attributes, again, has no attributes. Brahman is Shakti; Shakti is Brahman. They are not two. These are only two aspects, male and female, of the same Reality, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute.

From ‘The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna’

Shakti Worship and Sri Ramakrishna

by Swami Prabhananda (Translated by Swami Sunirmalananda)

The concept of shakti is indivisibly connected with Mother worship (shakti sadhana). Generally the worship of Durga, Kali, Sarasvati and other goddesses is considered Shakti worship. But the worship of Narayana, Shiva, Ganesha and other gods, too, is the worship of Shakti Herself. Whatever the means—image, symbol or yantra—the worship is only of Shakti. This is because, in the use of all these means there is a superimposition of the creation-preservation-destruction aspects of Shakti either fully or partially. So in a wider sense all worshippers are Shakti worshippers. The principal deity of the Shakti sadhana as well as Tantric sadhana is the Divine Mother Kali. She has various forms as represented by the Daṭṭa-mahāvīdyās. In order to understand the Tantric form of sadhana, which has had a very long history and got the form it had during Ramakrishna's time, we should know some of its specialities: 1. The doors of this system are open to all, irrespective of caste, colour or race. 2. This system can confer both worldly prosperity and spiritual emancipation. 3. The body is highly esteemed in the Tantras. To torture the body is not permitted. Our body is the home of great spiritual power. To develop and express this power is the goal. 4. The conclusion of all the Tantras is this: Whatever qualities are present in the universe are also present in the body.' Whatever is in the body is in the universe. 5. Shakti sadhana can be freely called the sadhana of Advaita. Swami Saradanandaji says, 'The enlightened Tantric, like the Advaitin, sees no difference between mud and sandal [paste], friend and foe, a dwelling house and the cremation ground.' 6. According to Advaita, Brahman is beyond qualities, without power, one, and nondual. But without the influence of Shakti, the world cannot go on. The Advaitin says that the world is unreal, mithyā. By 'unreal' is not meant something impossible. What is meant is this: Just as the snake is superimposed on the rope when we mistake a rope for a snake, unreality is superimposed on Reality. Brahman alone is real; Shakti is nothing but maya. 7. The primal power of the universe is one and non-dual. The Tantras, say that Power, or Shakti, is not unconscious, but is full of consciousness. According to the Durga Saptashati, the Goddess is called Consciousness in all beings. 8. Tantra sadhana is harmony-oriented. The Tantric method of sadhana combines elements of yoga, prayer, worship and meditation on the identity of the individual and the Absolute, and thus shows evident signs of eclecticism. 9. Shakti worship is predominantly a householder's sadhana. The scriptures too say that the

devout householder has been called gīhāvadhēta, a householder-mendicant. 10. The mainstay of Shakti worship is ācāra, or rites, and bhāva, or mood. In the Chandi She is called Durga. She is the loving wife of Shiva and She is the mother of Ganesha, Kartikeya, Lakshmi and Sarasvati. Mother Durga descends to the mortal realm every year to enjoy the love and affection of her mortal children.

The extensive, diverse and meaningful way in which Shakti sadhana expressed itself in Sri Ramakrishna's life was never before seen in any other aspirant. When he was young, he fell into a trance on the way while visiting Vishalakshi of Anur. He had a unique vision then. From then on his life took a different turn. From the day he began worshipping Mother Kali at Dakshineswar, the deeper, expansive and intensive sides of his Mother worship came to the fore. He had heard that 'When pleased, She is the giver of liberation to human beings.' He understood that unless the Divine Mother cleared the way, there could be no God-realization. Thus he pleased the Divine Mother with his purity and intense aspiration, and attained Her vision. He did not rest with the Divine Mother's vision; he also practised other Shakti disciplines through various moods. He moved about freely in the world of sadhana, becoming an instrument in the hands of the Divine Mother. Under the directions of Yogeshvari Brahmani, Sri Ramakrishna practised all the sixtyfour Tantric disciplines. There is a subtle intermingling of moods in these sixty-four methods. Gradually, he scaled the highest pinnacle of these methods of sadhana. Thereafter, he undertook Advaita sadhana under the tutelage of Totapuri. Being established in Advaitic knowledge, Sri Ramakrishna entered into the mood of the vijnani and remained a child of the Divine Mother. Coming down from nirvikalpa samadhi, he began enjoying the attitudes of devotee and devotion. According to Sri Ramakrishna, there is no difference between Kali, Krishna and Shiva. All of Sri Ramakrishna's sadhanas are tinged with the ideal of harmony. With the permission of the Divine Mother he practised the sadhanas of the different modes of Hinduism and those of other faiths. He would say: Do you know what the truth is? God has made different religions to suit different aspirants, times, and countries. All doctrines are only so many paths; but a path is by no means God Himself. Indeed, one can reach God if one follows any of the paths with wholehearted devotion. Suppose there are errors in the religion that one has accepted; if one is sincere and earnest, then God Himself

will correct those errors. The Divine Mother revealed to Sri Ramakrishna that just as She is of the form of the blissful Mother, She is also of the nature of the formless pure Consciousness. She is both with form and without form; She is both with attributes and without attributes; and much more. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that Kali is Brahman and Brahman is Kali. So long as the 'I'-consciousness of the aspirant remains, there are Kali, Krishna and so on. When that 'I' goes, the 'form merges into the formless'. Sri Ramakrishna went a step further. He said that Brahman and Shakti are the same. He said, 'He whom you address as Brahman is none other than She whom I call Shakti, the Primal Energy.' This attitude was evident in Sri Ramakrishna's everyday life. He did not want to be in samadhi and remain 'unconscious' with the knowledge of Brahman. He wanted to become a vijnani and come down to the plane of duality to enjoy the company of devotees. Even though there is the manifestation of Shakti in everything that has name and form, in women there is the greatest expression of the creative and protective aspects. It is due to this speciality that women are worshipped as sources of the universe and as symbols of the Divine Mother. Sri Ramakrishna did that. He worshipped his wife as the Divine Mother Tripurasundari and offered all the fruits of his sadhana at her feet. He considered all women as the representations of some or other form of the Divine Mother. He would say that he had the attitude of 'mother and child'. In Shakti sadhana, the attitude of a child towards its mother is very pure. In the attitude of the hero, there is a fall in most cases. The mansion of sadhana has seven storeys. Sri Ramakrishna had free access to all of them. Though he followed the child attitude towards the Divine Mother, he had become filled with the Divine Mother once and had accepted the worship of the devotees. This happened on the evening of Kali Puja in 1885. An eyewitness writes, 'Who Kali is or who he is, I can't understand. In Kali he alone is and in him She alone lives.' During the worship, the devotees saw his divine smile and

hands bestowing blessings, and were assured that they were always protected by the Lord. They were freed from fear. The Divine Mother Herself came in the form of Sri Sarada Devi and lived amidst us. Sri Sarada Devi accepted all human beings as her own children. In her presence both ordinary souls and great spiritual aspirants understand the completeness and glory of Shakti worship, and achieve tremendous inspiration. Through the holy trio, the worship of the Divine Mother has attained completeness, and all those sadhanas that were hidden in secrecy and darkness have been released from such stigmas and have become complete now. The breadth of vision, expansiveness and all-pervasiveness, and social utility that the Shakti worship of this holy trio under the leadership of Sri Ramakrishna has achieved is something novel and unheard of in the world of Mother worship. True, like in earlier times, the goal of Shakti worship is liberation of the individual. But owing to the needs of the times, it has also become an instrument of social good, and has also become easily accessible to all types of people. The Ramakrishna movement has come up by centring on the collective ideal of Shakti worship. If we compare this movement with the flow of the Ganga, we could say that Dakshineswar is its Gomukh and Belur Math its Gangotri. We may remember a statement of Swamiji regarding the speciality of this movement. He wrote to his brother disciples: 'Now we have a new India, with its new God, new religion, and new Vedas.' From image worship to the worship of the supreme Truth; from individual liberation to collective liberation; from Kali worship to Advaita Vedanta sadhana—all have been freed of boundaries and limitations. At the heart of all these is the dear child of the Divine Mother, Sri Ramakrishna. Monks and devotees of the Ramakrishna Mission, who are part of the great movement, feel that they are eager children of the Divine Mother seeking Her grace, and pray to Her earnestly: 'O Great Goddess, You are all pervasive, the Mother of all.'

RENOVATION UPDATE

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

The renovation work is going on in full swing. All framing work has been completed. Drywalls, HVAC ducting and Electrical cabling is in progress. Underground plumbing completed and approved by City inspection. Fire Alarm cabling completed; HVAC, Lift and Fire Alarm equipment installation in progress. Exposure of certain areas has revealed heavy leakage over many years. This needs to be fixed urgently, which requires extra funds. Roofing companies have been approached to obtain quotes. Due to weather constraints, it was decided to proceed with fixing the leakage on immediate basis, followed by roof replacement in June 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.

Swami Vijnanananda

In the Srimad Bhagavata, in reply to one of Uddhava's Sri Krishna describes the signs of a Sannyasin of spiritual realization as follows: "Though very learned, he plays about like a boy; though expert in everything, he sits like an idiot; hearing his disjointed words, people take him mad; though established in the Vedas, his behavior is very uncertain." (Bhagavata 11.18.29). This is, of course, is not applicable to a Sannyasin who is merely an enquirer (Vividishu) but only to a Vidwan or one who has attained knowledge or spiritual illumination. We have been blessed by witnessing the above qualities manifested in the pure life of Swami Vijnan Maharaj. His premonastic name was Hariprasanna Chattopadhyay. It is very true that although he was very erudite, he behaved like a little boy. Although he was proficient in so many subjects, he would often sit quietly like an ignorant and dull person, completely unmindful of his surroundings. Many were the occasions when we could not understand what appeared to us as his incoherent utterances. He had studied so many scriptural works, but one could never be sure of it from his outward behaviour. His attendants say that seeing his strange dress, boys on the streets of Allahabad used to stare at him. Seeing this, he would mischievously tell them, "What are you looking at – is it a monkey? Yes, it is a monkey, Ramji's monkey."

He always liked to live alone, all by himself. If a visitor, be it even a Sannyasin of the Order, were allowed to stay at the Ashrama for a day or two, he would at the end of the stipulated time be shown the railway timetable, and directed to leave the Ashrama. When sick, he did not like to take medicines. If anybody informed the Math about his sickness, he would be very much displeased, and would ask the transgressor to leave the Ashrama at once. Such was his amazing and apparently eccentric behavior. His dress used to be "Unique". On his head was a woolen cap which covered both his ears on the sides. He used to wear long coat reaching upto his knees which had many big pockets on both sides to hold many things. He used to wear small dhoti about five cubits long. On his legs he used to wear socks and slippers.

In 1921, Swami Vijnanananda had come to Belur Math for the construction of Swamiji's new temple. At that time, The Shrine had only had only the ground floor where Swamiji's statue is installed. There was no other structure near it. There was no embankment on the river side and at the time of flood-tide, the water of Ganga would come almost up to Swamiji's Shrine. One day a western gentleman came there and seeing the condition of Swamiji's Shrine, asked us, "Why do you keep Swami Vivekananda's Shrine in such a neglected condition? Do you know what a great respect we in the West have for him?" Mahapurush Maharaj said,

"This will be done as soon as Vijnan Maharaj takes the responsibility."

Revered Vijnan Maharaj was an Executive Engineer of Uttar Pradesh, and when Swamiji was still living, he had resigned from that high post and joined the Order at the Alambazar Math. It was at the behest of Swami Vivekananda, that Vijnan Maharaj took Vidwat Sannyasa (non-formal Sannyasa of an enlightened one) before the image of Sri Ramakrishna. Thereafter after the land for Belur Math was acquired, it was at the instance of Swamiji that Vijnan Maharaj took the responsibility to construct Sri Ramakrishna's Shrine, the building for the monastics' living quarters, and above it, on the first floor, Swami Vivekananda's room. The embankment on the Ganga and the flight of steps too were the result of his untiring labour. He was a great scholar and translated a great authoritative book on astronomy known as Suryasiddhanta, and few other books.

When Vijnan Maharaj took the work to construct Sri Thakur's Shrine, he was above 50 years old. He put in very hard and tireless work in this connection. In the morning after having tea and little snack, he used to present himself on the site at 8am and continued till about 1pm. Thereafter he used to sit on bench under a nearby tree and inspect minutely every piece of the work. At 1pm he used to have little Prasad of Sri Thakur and have a little rest and again at 2pm report at the site, with the labourers till late in the evening. Then he used to return back and have a few cups of tea, and at night a little Prasad of Sri Thakur. When Swami Brahmananda arrived at Belur Math from Bhuvaneshwar, all brahmacharis and monks used to gather around him at nightfall after Aratrika (vespers). The brother disciples and old Sannyasins would also join. Sometimes Maharaj used to say, "Why are you thus sitting here quietly for nothing? Just ask some questions. Better put them to Payson (Vijnan Maharaj). You probably do not know that Payson is a 'hidden Yogi'. He is the person to give you the right answer to your questions." On the other hand Vijnan Maharaj, like a small ignorant child, would answer with folded hands, "Please Maharaj-ji, what do I know? Please be gracious to answer them yourself." Such was his humility.

Swami Brahmananda ji would daily enquire about the progress of the construction work and if he suspected any defects, he would let Vijnan Maharaj know about them. Vijnan Maharaj, though, he had been a highly placed Government Engineer before, would accept the corrections without a murmur.

Excerpt from the book – *Invitation to Holy Company*,
by Swami Jnanatmananda

UPCOMING EVENTS CALENDAR

Program detail	Date & Time	Venue Address
Annual General Body meeting	<u>December 18</u> 11:00am	To be announced
Christmas Eve & Holy Mother Birthday	<u>December 24</u> 4.30pm	To be announced
Kalpataru	<u>January 1, 2017</u> 4.30pm	To be announced

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 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.

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 will be closed from **August 15 to December 15, 2016 (maybe be extended)** for Phase-2 Renovation Project. During this period only few activities will be conducted at the center in the ***Main Shrine, entrance will be through the main door on Emmett Avenue.*** 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):

Discussion on 'Complete works of Swami Vivekananda: Wednesdays @ 7.30pm after arati;

Scripture class: Fridays @ 7.30pm after arati;

Sunday Service: Sundays @ 11am;

Ramnam: Once every month

Vigil: Cancelled due to construction.

Vedanta Society of Toronto

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Minister and Teacher - Swami Kripamayananda, Ramakrishna Order of India

November 2016

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
RENOVATION IN PROGRESS AT VEDANTA SOCIETY		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u> No Scripture Class	<u>5</u>
<u>6</u> <u>11:00am</u> Lecture: 'The Last Moment'	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture Class: 'Vivekachudamani'	<u>12</u>
<u>13</u> <u>11:00am</u> Lecture: 'A True Vijnani' <u>5:00pm</u> RAMNAM	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture Class: 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>19</u> NO VIGIL THIS MONTH
<u>20</u> <u>11:00am</u> NO LECTURE	<u>21</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture Class: 'Vivekachudamani'	<u>26</u>
<u>27</u> <u>11:00am</u> Lecture: 'Seeing a Paramahansa'	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>			

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.