



# Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

120 Emmett Ave. Toronto, ON M6M 2E6 CANADA

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## Newsletter September 2016

### WORDS TO INSPIRE

**"Mother Kali and all gods and goddesses dwell in my body. If you meditate on my form that will be meditation on all gods and goddesses."**

*-Sri Ramakrishna*

On Sri Krishna's birthday, Swami Akhandananda said: 'On this day in 1890 or 91, I was in Etawah and read the Bhagavata for a long time. Earlier there had been heavy rain that soaked the bedding in the room, so it was put in the corner like a large pillow. While resting I leaned against the pile of bedding. The moon was in the sky, and I felt drowsy. Then I saw the Master. He put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Has anyone recognized that I came as an Incarnation of God?" I still see that sight before my eyes.'

Regarding meditation and spiritual practices, Swami Akhandananda told a brahmachari: 'Why do you always keep your eyes closed when you sit in the shrine? Look at the Lord and remember that he is sitting there. One day the Master was seated in the small room at Dakshineswar and giving some instructions. Some members of the Brahma Samaj were present and they would occasionally close their eyes for meditation. Master then said to them, "Well, what do you see by closing your eyes?" I did not understand his point at the time, but later I realized he meant that the Incarnation himself has come! Let your eyes be blessed by looking at him with all the love of your heart. the Lord is with you, so why close your eyes? When I told Swamiji about the incident at Dakshineswar, he was extremely happy.

'In the early days I would search for secluded places in Kolkata. One day I went to Eden Garden and saw a row of

trees with multicolored leaves. Two people were meditating under them, so I sat there as well. Gradually my meditation deepened. When I rose from meditation, I noticed that those two people were occasionally closing their eyes and pressing them to create a flashing light. When an average person meditates on the formless Reality with his eyes closed, he sees only darkness. But when the devotee who meditates on God with form closes his eyes, he will see the Lord's effulgence. Instead of sitting aimlessly for meditation, work and think of the Lord while repeating His name. Very few people actually see their Chosen Ideal the moment they close their eyes in meditation.

'If you work thoroughly, and always keep your mind engaged in work, negative thoughts will not enter it. But if you sit quietly, bad thoughts will come. Then, if you find a companion, you will sink further in gossip and criticizing.

'Do you know what rest truly is? It is to switch from one work to another. For example, when you are tired after labouring in the fields, you go inside and begin some carpentry work, and so on. Work done in this fashion lacks monotony and is enjoyable.

From the book 'Swami Akhandananda\_- As we saw him', compiled in Bengali by Swami Chetanananda and translated by Swami Swahananda & Prasun De. Pg 91-93.

### IMPORTANT NOTE

Vedanta Society will be closed from **August 15 to December 15, 2016** 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:

*Discussion on 'Complete works of Swami Vivekananda: every Wednesday @ 7.30pm after arati;*

*Scripture class: every Friday @ 7.30pm after arati;*

*Sunday Service: -every Sunday @ 11am;*

*Ramnam: Once every month, please see the calendar below for details.*

*Vigil: Once every month, please see the calendar below for details.*

## Why Do We Suffer?

Why do we suffer? We see so much suffering in this world and much of it seems inexplicable. A child is born with a crippling illness. A good person loses his job or family. Wars and famines kill thousands. Is there any meaning or purpose for all this suffering? If one believes in a Personal God, then one might say that it is God's will that there be suffering in this world. But why would a beneficent God will such a thing? Can suffering somehow be transmuted into something positive and uplifting? Is there a way to end suffering? These are age old questions.

**Suffering Inevitable:** In Buddhism the first of the Four Noble Truths is that life is suffering. All life knows sorrow. We are all caught in the web of suffering. Every embodied being, because it is embodied, has suffering. We all desire to be free from pain and have pleasure, yet we see in life that 'having' brings 'not having', joy brings sorrow, birth brings death, pleasure brings pain. All things bring their opposite with them. We keep somehow hoping that soon this will all be over, and then we will have only joy and no pain. We spend most of our time and energy simply trying to make our existence more comfortable, more pleasurable. We want to be happy. But in the relative plane lasting happiness is not possible, because the relative world itself is a series of changes. We need to really understand this. If we understand our bondage, then a desire to be free will come.

Time, space and causation are all tied together with change, beginning and ending, life and death. We are not the same person we were even five minutes ago. Our cells are constantly dying and being reborn. Everything that has birth, also decays and dies. Nothing stays the same. A jiva, a body-mind complex, is really just a series of changes; and Time, the all-consuming, is chewing up every one of us.

**The Cause of Suffering:** The second Noble Truth is that suffering has a cause or source. Sorrow is defined as distress caused by loss, affliction, disappointment or regret. When we are attached to something, we feel suffering when it changes. All suffering has a cause. According to Buddhist and Vedantic thought, pain, mental or physical, is directly caused by karmic factors—the fruits of our past physical, verbal and mental actions. These factors impel us to take birth in a body, and cause us to experience pain. But when one lives a truly spiritual life even though there may be pain, one can live so that

one is not distressed by it. One can live so that one doesn't build further painful karmas.

A person established in Truth will see that disease, old age and death come to all beings. Many unsatisfactory experiences of life are natural, just part of the life cycle, so an advanced aspirant will not allow his mind to be

distressed by them. Or we may see suffering as a means of working out lessons we need to learn here, such as patience, forbearance and compassion. Often these painful things are our greatest teachers.

Our constant desire for things, our attachment, and clinging to life, bring us in the end pain. We suffer when we cling to something which is about to change, or when we desire something that we cannot have. We suffer also when we are united with something we don't want. We should look into our own minds to see the truth of this. We are constantly reaching out for, trying to get or hold on to, something, grabbing and holding, trying to complete ourselves. Swami Vivekananda says, 'What makes us miserable? The cause of all miseries from which we suffer is desire. The secret is, if we really understand the cause of our suffering, we can let go of our attachment to pain-bringing actions. Selfishness is the cause of suffering. There is no other cause. We will not really be free from suffering until we discover that we are not separate little entities. We are united, already complete and whole. We don't need anything from outside to complete us.

According to Buddhist and Vedantic thought, all suffering is 'dependent arising', that is within the realm of causation and time. It comes because of change and is dependent on relationships between things, cause and effect. If we study the situation we see that even pleasures, because they change, carry the seeds of suffering in them. All beings desire to be free from pain, both physical and mental. This is natural, but we don't know how to get real happiness. We keep looking for it out there. Every action brings reaction, and we are caught up in our actions, many of which only cause further pain. This is the nature of external, perceptual reality. It is also the nature of our mental reality. Within the realm of causation there will always be desire, grief and pain.

**Cessation of Suffering:** The third Noble Truth is that there can be a cessation of suffering. Because it does have a cause, sorrow can have an end. What a wonderful message! We are seeking abiding happiness. Truth and

Truth alone. All the sages tell us, Truth is blissful. 'The greater the renunciation, the greater the Bliss, because our true nature is then revealed. It is said when one even touches that ground, that inner Truth, Bliss (ananda), wells up spontaneously. Then there is no have and have not. There the very question of suffering disappears like a dream. If we believe that suffering can have an end, that we can wake up, then the next question arises immediately. What is the way to remove all sorrow?

**The Solution:** The fourth Noble Truth gives us the answer, the way out of suffering. In a nutshell it is the Eightfold Path: (1) Right understanding; (2) Right aspiration; (3) Right speech; (4) Right action or conduct; (5) Right livelihood; (6) Right effort; (7) Right mindfulness; and (8) Right meditation. These are all spiritual practices. Through the Eightfold Path, according to Buddhism, suffering can be brought to an end. Vedanta also says through spiritual disciplines, self-effort and grace, one can realize the Truth. Liberation is possible. According to Advaitic philosophy, one must follow the path of knowledge. One must realize directly, in a totally non-dualistic manner, the final nature of the mind. This is the path of jnana. In Vedanta and some other religious traditions, even in some forms of Buddhism, another path, the path of bhakti, also is stressed. In this path with real faith and trust one seeks refuge in a Personal God. Whichever path we follow, we are seeking to be free from sorrow. In Vedanta we say, one must realize God, and this means giving up the little self. When one really lets go of things, sees them as they really are, or really takes refuge,

immediately the heart is filled with bliss—because that is our true nature, free and pure.

**Ignorance and Attachment:** the Root Cause is ignorance of our own true nature that causes the suffering. We are confused. We are identifying ourselves with other things and we are unwilling to let go of this identification. If someone asks us the question, 'Who are you?', we usually reply first with our name. Swami Vivekananda tells us, 'The greatest of all lies is that we are bodies. Body is the name of a stream of matter continuously changing. Mind is the name of a stream of consciousness or thought continuously changing. All these identities that we have given ourselves, bring us pain because we cling to them.

**Inner Change through Suffering:** Suffering itself can be the stimulus that urges a person onward to realization. Sometimes when one is really hurt in this world, say when someone we really love dies and we suffer grief, suddenly from within the heart a real cry goes out. 'I want something that cannot die, something that can never be taken away.' Through suffering, through forbearance, a person often gains inner strength. It is a great austerity to bear suffering cheerfully, without complaint. Forbearance, titiksha, strengthens the will power. It is one of the great virtues. If we take realization of God to be the ultimate goal, then everything that happens becomes a tool, an instrument, a way, to attain the goal.

*Adapted from the article by Pravrajika Sevaprana  
Published in Prabuddha Bharata April 2002*

## **RENOVATION UPDATE**

Permit from the City has been obtained. Work for Phase-2 renovation has started in August and expected to be completed in next 5 months. Packing and moving has been completed. Demolition work has been completed. Pictures related to the work have been posted on the website.

Due to renovation work, all devotees are requested to kindly follow the safety rules and avoid roaming around in 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.



## Vedanta Society of Toronto

Annual Seminar 2016

**Annual Seminar will be held on  
Saturday, September 10, 2016  
from 9:30 am to 4:00 pm.**

**Venue :** University of Toronto - MULTI FAITH CENTRE:  
569 Spadina Ave., Toronto, ON M5S 2J7

### Speakers :

**Rev. Swami Tyagananda**, Head of Vedanta Society of Boston, USA

**Amrita Daniere**, Dean at UTM

**John Ralston Saul**, Essayist and Philosopher

**V. Kumar Murty**, Chair of the Department of Mathematics at the U of T

**Seminar Topic :** *"Spirituality in an age of technology:  
Can your GPS help you find God?"*

**Registration Fee :** \$40.00 per person  
\$10.00 for students

Please confirm your participation by emailing to:  
[info@vedantatoronto.ca](mailto:info@vedantatoronto.ca)



## UPCOMING EVENTS CALENDAR

<b>Program detail</b>	<b>Date &amp; Time</b>	<b>Venue Address</b>
<b>Annual Seminar</b>	<b><u>September 10</u></b> 9.30am to 4.30pm	<b>University of Toronto</b> The Multi-Faith Centre 569 Spadina Avenue Toronto, ON M5S 2J7
<b>Opening lecture</b> <i>by Swami Tyagananda</i>	<b><u>September 11</u></b> 11am to 1pm	<b>Arya Samaj Mississauga</b> 405 Watline Ave, Mississauga ON L4Z 1P3
<b>Durga Puja</b>	<b><u>October 9</u></b> <b><u>Maha Ashtami</u></b> 10am to 1pm	<b>Sindhi Gurmandir Temple</b> 207 Queens Plate Dr, Etobicoke, ON M9W 6Z7
	<b><u>October 10</u></b> <b><u>Maha Navami &amp; Vijaya Dashami</u></b> 10am to 1pm	
<b>Kali Puja</b>	<b><u>October 29</u></b> 5.30pm to 8.30pm	<b>To be announced</b>
<b>Christmas Eve &amp; Holy Mother Birthday</b>	<b><u>December 24</u></b> 4.30pm to 8.30pm	<b>To be announced</b>
<b>Annual General Body meeting</b>	<b><u>After renovation is completed</u></b>	<b>Vedanta Society of Toronto</b>

## 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:** 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.

*This will be held in the Meditation Room adjoining the Main Shrine, entrance will be from the Main Door located on Emmett Avenue.*

*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. *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.

# Vedanta Society of Toronto

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Minister and Teacher - Swami Kripamayananda, Ramakrishna Order of India

### September 2016

Sunday	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Friday	Saturday
<b>RENOVATION IN PROGRESS AT VEDANTA SOCIETY</b>				<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<b>10 Annual Seminar</b> "Spirituality in an age of technology: Can your GPS help you find God?"  <b>Venue: U of T - MULTI FAITH CENTRE</b>
<b>11</b> <u>Lecture: 'What Vivekananda Did for Us' by Swami Tyagananda</u>  <b>Venue: Arya Samaj Temple, Mississauga</b>	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u>	<b>16 7:30pm</b> <b>Scripture Class:</b> 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<b>17</b> <b>6:00AM to 6:00PM</b>  <b>VIGIL</b>
<b>18</b> <u>Lecture: 'World-inside and outside'</u>  <b>Venue: Vedanta Society of Toronto</b>	<u>19</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>22</u>	<b>23 7:30pm</b> <b>Scripture Class:</b> 'Vivekachudamani'	<u>24</u>
<b>25</b> <u>Lecture: 'How to solve problems'</u>  <b>Venue: Vedanta Society of Toronto</b>	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	<b>30 7:30pm</b> <b>Scripture Class:</b> 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	
<b>5:00PM</b> <b>RAMNAM</b>						

### **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.