



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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WORDS TO INSPIRE

“One who is living his last birth will come here. A person who has sincerely called on God, even once, will definitely come here. ”

-Sri Ramakrishna

The Concept of God in Hinduism

How does one approach God? As we have said, it is difficult to conceive of the Absolute. It is easy to worship a personal God. Swami Vivekananda defines bhakti as love of God, differentiating it from mere devotion wherein something is expected of God. In the Vaishnava tradition great stress has been placed on the loving relationship with God. The Vaishnavas recognize five possible human relationships with God. The first is the calm attitude of the yogi, but mixed with a little emotion. Then comes the attitude of a servant - God is the Master and I am his attendant who serves him. The third is the attitude of a friend. In this relationship the love and intimacy are somewhat greater than that between the servant and the master. The fourth attitude is that of a parent who looks upon God as his or her child as the baby Krishna, baby Christ, or baby Rama. This type of devotion is considered higher than the previous ones since one does not expect anything from the child but is only concerned about protecting and serving it. Such a devotee feel that he is protecting the Lord, as a child from all onslaughts.

Finally comes the highest stage according to this tradition: the attitude of the consort of God, an unmotivated love based on complete equality. This love, according to the Vaishnava scriptures,

is the highest because the lover and the beloved ultimately reach a state of perfect identification.

These are the five relationships that one can form with God according to the Vaishnava tradition. They are all based on human analogies.

To this list Sri Ramakrishna added one more: the love of the child for the mother, which is of the purest form. When a devotee tries to practice one of the other five relationships, expectations may get mixed in, though gradually the relationships do become purified. Loving God with the attitude of a lover may be the most exalted in its highest form, but it often gets mixed up with human ideas. The human emotions associated with these symbolic relationships do not leave a person until he has attained the higher reaches of his practice.

Sri Ramakrishna says that the love of God as Mother is free from all such defects. It cannot be misused. Even the most brutish person will generally have a pure type of love for his mother, free from lust and lower emotions. That is why Sri Ramakrishna said that the attitude of looking upon God as Mother is best, for it raises the mind to a higher ideal right from the beginning. It purifies the mind of its limitations and elevates it to a higher level.

-From 'Vedanta and Ramakrishna' by Swami Swahananda, p.110

Sri Ramakrishna: From Human to Divine (Part-2)

(Based on a talk by Prof. Emeritus Narendra N. Bakhshi)

Other Highly Important Consequences of Sri Ramakrishna's Life and Teachings

1. Love of Man

After he was fully established in Divinity, and knowing that He was an incarnation/Avatar, another chapter, or phase, of His life started.

A tremendous desire arose in His mind and He expressed it thus: "I want to commune with human beings; I want to commune with Thy devotees; I do not want to see Thee in ecstasy, O Divine Mother. Give ecstasy to those who want it; please don't take me away from communion with men and woman."

This is a great chapter in the life of Sri Ramakrishna—this communion with man, without, following his communion with God, the One Self of all within. It was that human impulse that brought him to Calcutta, to Balaram Babu's house, and to other devotees' houses.

"Swami Ranganathananda says that Balaram Babu's house is a symbol of that love of man in Sri Ramakrishna and that fascination of Sri Ramakrishna to the human heart, irrespective of caste or creed or race or sex. This is what I witness actually happening today, when I go around the world year after year; and it is an inspiring experience to see how people open their hearts spontaneously to receive Sri Ramakrishna on reading the great book: The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna."

2. Spiritual Ideal

One of the important contributions of Sri Ramakrishna is the re-establishment of the ideal of God realization in the modern world. In a world, in which people's faith in traditional religions has been considerably reduced by the relentless attack of forces of atheism, materialism and scientific thinking, Sri Ramakrishna established the possibility of having DIRECT EXPERIENCE of transcendent Reality. His life has enabled thousands of people to gain or regain faith in God, and in the eternal verities of religion. As Mahatma Gandhi has stated: "His life enables us to see God face to face. No one can read the story of his life

without being convinced that God alone is real and that all else is an illusion."

3. Harmony of Religions

Sri Ramakrishna, however, is more well-known all over the world as the Prophet of Harmony of Religions. He did not say that all the religions are the same. He recognized differences among religions but showed that, in spite of these differences, all religions lead to the same ultimate goal, and hence they are all valid and true. These days we call it "pluralism." Sri Ramakrishna is its primary originator.

The uniqueness of Sri Ramakrishna's view is that it was based, not on speculation, but on direct experience gained through actual practice. He himself had done the experiencing. Not citing somebody else's experiences.

Conflicts among religions and the rise of religious fundamentalism are a major threat to peace, prosperity, and progress of humanity. Sri Ramakrishna's Doctrine of Harmony of Religions has immense importance in the modern world.

Regarding this, the distinguished British historian, Arnold Toynbee has written: "Mahatma Gandhi's principle of non-violence (ahimsa) and Ramakrishna's testimony to the harmony of religions: here we have the attitude and the spirit, that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family — and in the atomic age, this is the only alternative to destroying ourselves."

4. Regeneration of Hinduism (Sanatana

Dharma) On account of various reasons both internal and external (Muslim invasions from Afghanistan and Iran and the steam-roller of science brought in by the British) Hinduism had degenerated and became decadent. In the words of Swami Vivekananda:

"As a consequence, they (the Hindus) reduced India, the fair land of religion, to a scene of almost infernal confusion by breaking up piecemeal the one eternal religion of the Vedas (Santana dharma) the grand synthesis of all the aspects of the spiritual Ideal, into conflicting sects, and by seeking to sacrifice each other in the flames of

sectarian hatred and intolerance.” Thus, the time was ripe for another Avatar to regenerate the religion of the Vedas what was needed was a ‘scientific approach.’

Sri Ramakrishna was a spiritual giant and also a ‘spiritual scientist par excellence’. All the Vedic truths variously described in the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, Yoga Tantra and other disciplines were experienced and proven by him. Thus, his experiences and the experience of his disciples lent full credence to the various observations made in the Hindu scriptures.

In addition, Swami Vivekananda’s forceful message and performance at the First World Parliament of Religions in Chicago (1893) as well as his teachings, generated great trust and pride in the Vedic scriptures and greatly helped toward the regeneration and reinvigoration of Sanatana dharma.

This is what Swami Vivekananda has to say:

“Before the effulgence of this awakening, the glory of all past revivals in her history will pale like stars before the rising sun, and compared with this mighty manifestation of ‘renewed strength, all

the many past epochs of such restorations will be as child’s play.”

Since then the message of Vedanta has spread and is spreading all over the world, not only by the various centers organized in the name of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, but by many other such organizations as well.

5. Indian Freedom Movement

Many leaders of the freedom movement (Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Aurobindo Ghosh, Tilak, C. Rajagopalachari, and many others) were greatly inspired by the teachings and experiences of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna. Here is what C. Rajagopalachari said:

“Swami Vivekananda saved Hinduism and saved India. But for him, we would have lost our religion and would not have gained our freedom. We therefore owe everything to Swami Vivekananda. May his faith, his courage, and his wisdom ever inspire us so that we may keep safe the treasures we have received from him.”

This inspiring story has no end. The two of them are inspiring many people even today.

Sri Sarada Devi, The Holy Mother – (Durga Puja)- By Swami Tapasyananda

In 1907 the Holy Mother attended the Durga Puja celebration held at the house of Girish Chandra Ghosh, the great Bengali dramatist and a prominent householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. She was then in poor health owing to malaria, and it was only the earnestness of the great devotee Girish and his sister that brought her from Jayrambati to Calcutta to attend the festival. Ever since his mystic experiences connected with the Holy Mother's spiritual identity, Girish looked upon her as the veritable embodiment of the Mother of the Universe, and the prospect of her presence at his worship therefore filled him with ecstatic joy. The Mother was accommodated at Balaram Babu's house and visited Girish's place to attend worship. The first two days of the ceremony passed smoothly. The worship in fact took a twofold form. While the worship of the image was going on, streams of devotees who went to see her at her residence and at the place of Girish Ghosh, continuously offered flowers for long hours at the feet of the living Mother in the

shape of the Holy Mother. The strain of the first two days' experience told upon her declining health, and she had to announce her incapacity to attend on the third day which was the most important day of worship. This was terribly depressing news for Girish and he felt that without the Holy Mother's presence, the worship of the Goddess, which he had organized with great effort and at great expense, would be nothing more than pageantry. When the clouds of disappointment were thus gathering in the devotee's mind, the Holy Mother, by divine intuition, as it were, changed her mind and, just when the most auspicious moment of the worship was to begin, announced herself at the entrance of Girish's house. The news of the Holy Mother's arrival revived the drooping spirit of devotees and poured new enthusiasm and fervour into their hearts. On the third day also the Mother received the flower offerings of her innumerable devotees, including the actors and actresses of the theatre conducted by Girish Chandra Ghosh.***

First Durga Puja at Belur Math

Durga Puja was first celebrated at Belur Math in 1901. Since then Durga Puja has been celebrated at Belur Math year after year, although for a few years after the first celebration in 1901, Pratima worship was not done. (In this connection it should be mentioned that Durga Puja was conducted on a small scale, without the image, by the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna during the early years of Ramakrishna Math at Baranagar.) It was Swami Vivekananda himself who started the first Durga Puja with the image at Belur Math. As a rule, Hindu Sannyasins do not conduct this kind of ritualistic worship. Why then did Swamiji start the new tradition?

One reason was to gain the acceptance of the local community for the new way of life that Swamiji and his monastic brothers were leading. The Hindu society in Calcutta had not fully accepted Swamiji's going to the West, and the rather unconventional ways of life at Belur Math which included disregard for caste rules and mixing with Western people. As a matter of fact, the celebration of Durga Puja helped to remove much of the misunderstanding and misgivings about the new monastic institution among the local people.

Another reason was Swamiji wanted to institutionalize respect for divinity of motherhood and sanctity of womanhood. Swamiji saw that one of the main reasons for the advancement of Western people was the elevation of women in the West, and one of the main reasons for the backwardness of India was the neglect of women in this country. Worship of the Divine Mother, especially the Kumari Puja, would

create the awareness of the potential divinity of women and a respectful attitude towards them.

A third reason was supernatural. A few days before Durga Puja in 1901, Swamiji had a vision of Durga Puja being done at Belur Math. More or less at that time, Swami Brahmanandaji saw in a vision Mother Durga coming across the Ganga from Dakshineswar to Belur Math. Swamiji asked Raja Maharaj to make preparations for Durga Puja immediately, although only a few days were left to begin the Puja.

The main problem was to get a clay image for worship. Enquiries at Kamartuli (the street in Kolkata where artisans make clay images) revealed that there was a single beautiful image of Durga in a shop. The person who had ordered it had not turned up, and so the artisan agreed to sell it to the monks.

Apart from the image, a lot of other things had to be collected for the elaborate ritualistic worship. Under able direction of Swami Brahmanandaji everything was done well at short notice.

The first Durga Puja at Belur Math was conducted in a huge Pandal (decorative shed) on the open ground to the north of the old shrine. The invocatory worship on Shashthi (the 6th day of the lunar month) was on 18 October 1901. The Pujari was Brahmachari Krishnalal and the Tantradharak was Isvar Chandra Chakravarty, the father of Shashi Maharaj. Sitting under the Bel tree (which now stands in front of his temple) Swamiji sang Agamani songs welcoming the Divine Mother.



IMPORTANT EVENTS OF THE MONTH

SENIORS DAY will be celebrated on October 4, at 10.30am

MAHALAYA, a programme of songs and narration to welcome Mother Durga, will be held on October 11 at 11 am.

DURGA PUJA CELEBRATION:

MahaAshtami on October 21, 2015 at 6:30pm

Maha Navami on October 22, 2015 at 6:30pm

VijayaDashami on October 23, 2015 at 6:30pm

UPCOMING EVENTS

KALI PUJA will be celebrated on November 10, 2015 at 6:30 pm.

AGM on Nov 15 at 11 am

GUEST LECTURE on Nov 22 at 11 am by

Swami Amarananda, Minister in-charge,

Vedanta Centre of Geneva.

REGULAR PROGRAMMES

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

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 Neighbourhood & 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 programmes, 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.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Parking on the road beside the Vedanta Society which is a Fire Route and which belongs to the West Park Hospital, is strictly prohibited. West Park Hospital has informed that they are going to give tickets @ \$250.00 for illegal parking on the road as well as in their property other than the designated parking area.

Vedanta Society of Toronto

Minister and Teacher - Swami Kripamayananda, Ramakrishna Order of India

CALENDAR OF EVENTS October 2015

Sunday	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Friday	Saturday
				<u>1</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>2</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>3</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen
<u>4</u> 10.30am SENIORS DAY	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>9</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: 'Vivekachudamani'	<u>10</u>
1:30 pm VVM						
<u>11</u> 11am MAHALAYA PROGRAMME	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>16</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>17</u> 6am to 6pm Vigil
<u>18</u> 11 am Video Lecture	<u>19</u>	<u>20</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>21</u> 6.30pm Durga Puja MAHA ASHTAMI	<u>22</u> 6.30pm Durga Puja MAHA NAVAMI	<u>23</u> 6.30pm Durga Puja VIJAYA DASHAMI	<u>24</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen
1:30pm VVM						
<u>25</u> 11am Lecture: 'Preparation for Exit' 5pm <i>Ram Nam</i>	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>31</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held on Sunday, **November 15, 2015 at 11am**. Any member wishing to nominate an active and willing member of the Vedanta Society for the Executive Committee may do so by writing to the Society. All nominations must be received by October 31, 2015 and be duly proposed and seconded, and approved by Swami Kripamayananda. All our members and friends are requested to attend the meeting. If you are unable to attend, please fill in the proxy form included in October 2015 Newsletter and send it so that it reaches us before October 31.

Members are requested to send their Proxy forms by October 31, 2015. They may email the filled-in form to <info@vedantatoronto.ca>