



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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WORDS TO INSPIRE

"One cannot realize God without sincerity and simplicity. God is far, far away from the crooked heart."

-Sri Ramakrishna

Sri Ramakrishna and His Divine Play

Sometime before the Master passed away, a pious woman devotee went to him and expressed her desire to go to Vrindaban and practise austerities. The Master discouraged her with a movement of his hand and said: "Why will you go? What will you do there? One who has it here, has it there; and one who does not have it here, does not have it there." Because of her longing, the woman devotee could not accept the Master's words and so left for Vrindaban. But she later told us that she did not derive much benefit from the pilgrimage on that occasion. Moreover, she never saw the Master again because he passed away shortly after she left.

The Master told us many times that he visited each holy place with a specific spiritual mood in mind. He said: "I expected to find everyone in Varanasi absorbed in samadhi, meditating on Shiva twenty-four hours a day, and everyone in Vrindaban wild with ecstatic joy in the company of Krishna. But when I went to those places, I found them to be different." The Master's extraordinary and simple mind accepted and believed everything like a five-year-old boy. Since childhood, we have learned to look upon people and things with critical eyes. How can our crooked minds have that kind of faith? When we find people who believe anything without question, we consider them foolish and dull-witted. We heard from the Master for the first time: "Look, people become guileless and open-minded as a result of many austerities and various sadhanas. One cannot attain God without simplicity. He reveals His true nature to a person who is simple and believing." Again, lest one think that one must be stupid in order to become honest and believing, the Master said: "Be a devotee. But does that mean you should be a fool?" He also

said: "Always discriminate between what is real and what is unreal, what is eternal and what is transient. Shun the transitory and fix your mind on the eternal." Unable to reconcile these two statements, some of us were scolded by the Master many times. Swami Yogananda had not then renounced his home. His household needed an iron pot, so he went to Barabazar to buy one. After reminding the shopkeeper of the evil consequences of dishonesty, he said, "Look here, take a fair price for the article, and please make sure that there is no crack or leak in it." "Of course, sir, I shall do that," replied the shopkeeper. He then selected a pot and gave it to Yogananda. Trusting the shopkeeper, he took the pot and brought it home without examining it. But after returning to Dakshineswar he found a crack in it. When the Master heard of this, he reproached him: "What? You bought a pot and didn't examine it first? The shopkeeper was there to do business, not to practise religion. Why did you believe him and get cheated? Just because you're a devotee, that's no reason to be a fool. Should you be deceived by people? Henceforth, when you go shopping, first examine the thing thoroughly and then pay. Don't accept the article without confirming that it is the right weight. And don't fail to demand the little extras that are customary." We could give many such examples, but this is not the place to do so. We shall continue our topic now, after having referred to the Master's extraordinary simplicity along with his wonderful power of discrimination.

-By Swami Saradananda

-Translated by Swami Chetanananda. Pg 607-608

Sri Ramakrishna: From Human to Divine (Part-1)

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

What can one say about this Avatar of the modern age? Even the great Swami Vivekananda in one of his speeches said, “Truly, I tell you, I have understood Him very little.”

How can one describe the achievements of an Avatar who not only experienced and realized the ‘Ultimate Truth,’ according to the various disciplines prescribed in the Hindu scriptures, but also attained the highest realization through the paths of Islam and Christianity. He looked upon Jesus and Buddha as incarnations of God and venerated the ten Sikh Gurus.

Comments made by a great world thinker British historian Arnold J. Toynbee (1889–1975) point to the tremendous importance of Sri Ramakrishna’s message for all times.

“Sri Ramakrishna’s message was unique in being expressed in action. The message itself was the perennial message of Hinduism In the Hindu view, each of the higher region is a true vision and a right way, and all of them alike are indispensable to mankind, because each gives a different glimpse of the same truth, and each leads by a different route to the same goal of human endeavors. Each, therefore, has a special spiritual value of its own which is not to be found in any of the others.

To know this is good, but it is not enough. Religion is not just a matter for study; it is something that has to be experienced and to be lived and this is the field in which Sri Ramakrishna manifested his uniqueness. He practiced successively almost every form of Indian religion and philosophy, and he went on to practice Islam and Christianity as well. His religious activity and experience were, in fact, comprehensive to a degree that had perhaps never before been attained by any other religious genius, in India or elsewhere. ...

Sri Ramakrishna made his appearance and delivered his message at the time and the place at which he and his message were needed. This message could hardly have been delivered by anyone who had not been brought up in the Hindu religious tradition. Sri Ramakrishna was born in Bengal in 1836. He was born into a world that, in his lifetime, was, for the first time, being united on a literally world-wide scale. Today we are still living in this transitional chapter of the worlds’ history, but it is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a Western beginning will have to have an Indian ending, if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race. ... At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way of salvation for mankind is an Indian way. The Emperor Ashoka’s and the Mahatma Gandhi’s principle of nonviolence and Sri 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. In the Atomic

Age, the whole human race has a utilitarian motive for following this Indian way. No utilitarian motive could be stronger or more respectable in itself. The survival of the human race is at

stake. Yet even the strongest and most respectable utilitarian motive is only a secondary reason for taking Ramakrishna’s and Gandhi’s and Ashoka’s teaching to heart and acting on it. The primary reason is that this teaching is right — and is right because it flows from a true vision of spiritual reality.” Sri Ramakrishna came at a very critical juncture in the history of Hinduism and India. His advent and teachings tremendously helped toward the regeneration of Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism) as well as played a significant role toward the Indian freedom movement.

1. Sri Ramakrishna as Human Aspirant

Sri Ramakrishna was born on February 18, 1836, in the village of Kamarpukur about sixty miles northwest of Kolkata, India, in a poor but pious Brahmin family. At the age of six, he experienced his first ecstasy while watching a flight of white cranes moving against a background of black clouds. When he was sixteen years old, his brother Ram Kumar took him to Kolkata to assist him in his priestly duties at the Kali temple in Dakshineswar (built in 1855 by Rani Rasmani). When Ram Kumar died a few months later, Ramakrishna was appointed as a priest. He developed intense devotion to Mother Kali and spent hours in loving adoration of her image, forgetting the rituals of priestly duties. His intense longing culminated in the vision of Mother Kali. The Gospel beautifully describes his thoughts and feelings:

“... sometimes in moments of skepticism, he would cry ‘Art thou real, Mother, or is it all fiction – mere poetry without any reality? If thou dost exist, why do I not see Thee? Is religion a mere fantasy and art Thou only a figment of man’s imagination?’”

He describes his first experience:

“... when suddenly the blessed mother revealed Herself. The building with their different parts, the temple and everything else, vanished from my sight, leaving no trace whatsoever, and in their stead, I saw a limitless, infinite, effulgent ocean of Bliss. As far as they eye could see, the shining billows were madly rushing at me from all sides with a terrific noise, to swallow me up.”

He, however, was not fully satisfied and became eager for an uninterrupted vision of the Divine Mother, and ultimately “... His visions became deeper and more intimate. He no longer had to meditate to behold the Divine Mother. Even while retaining consciousness of the outer world, he could see Her as tangibly as the temples, the trees, the river, and the men around him.”

Can we imagine the force and the power of his devotion? What tremendous faith and what extent of

devotion make a stone image come alive. It is difficult to comprehend.

We, who are trained in the Western system of education, simply can't believe or comprehend it. What can one compare it with?

This is what Joseph Campbell (1904–1987) had to say in this regard :

The Europeans who protested against the empire of mediocrity themselves failed to attain to the springs of power. So their world of ideas went down before the steam roller. But in Dakshineswar, only a few miles outside the Victorian metropolis of Calcutta, practicing his sadhana not according to enlightened, modern methods, but after the most ancient, most superstitious, most idolatrous traditions of timeless India: now hanging to a tree, like a monkey; now posturing and dressing as a girl; now weeping before an image; now sitting, night and day, like a stump; six years unable to close his eyes, himself terrified at what was happening to him, swooning in the ocean of Mother's love; stunned by the experience of Brahman — Sri Ramakrishna cut the hinges of heavens and released the fountains of divine bliss."

He followed the discipline of Tantra and experienced the awakening of the Kundalini Shakti (the serpent power). He actually saw the rising of the kundalini and experienced the union of the Shakti and Shiva in the 'sahasrara lotus,' thus proving the validity of yogic experiences as described in the scriptures.

Thus, after experiencing the Godhood as per the various disciplines of Hinduism, he turned his attention to Islam and Christianity. He looked upon Jesus and Buddha as incarnations of God.

His experiences revealed to him that the same Godhood is experience by those religions as well.

Thus, he confirmed the famous veda-vakya:

"Ekam Sat, Viprah Bahudha Vadanti" (Truth is only One, the wise call it by different names)."

2. Divinity of Sri Ramakrishna

After twelve years of intense sadhana, another wonderful chapter starts in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. Once, he said : "There is no outsider here. The other day when Harish was with me, I saw Satchidananda come out of this sheath. It said, 'I incarnate Myself in every age.' I saw that it is the fullest manifestation of Satchidananda; but this time the Divine Power is manifested through the glory of sattva."

When Ramakrishna's mother was dying at Dakshineswar, her body was carried to bakula-tala ghat on the Ganges. The Master cried as he held his mother's feet and exclaimed: "Mother, how fortunate you are that you carried me in your womb." As a grief-stricken man, the Master mourned his mother; but as a Divine Being, he told her that she was not an ordinary woman: she had carried Narayan, the Supreme Brahman, in her womb.

Various examples of Ramakrishna's Divinity Sri Ramakrishna not only had the fullest experiences of

Godhood himself, but he could vouchsafe such experience to his deserving disciples as well.

(i) After the future Swami Vivekananda (Narendra) had accepted Sri Ramakrishna as his guru, the Master wanted to train him in the teachings of non-dualistic Vedanta philosophy. "But Narendra because of his Brahmo upbringing, considered it wholly blasphemous to look on man as one with his creator. One day at the temple garden he laughingly said to a friend: 'How silly! This jug is God! This cup is God! Whatever we see is God! And, we too are God! Nothing could be more absurd.'

Sri Ramakrishna came out of his room and gently touched him. Spellbound, he immediately perceived that everything indeed was God. A new universe opened around him. Returning home in a dazed state, he found there too that the food, the plate, the eater himself, the people around him, were all God. When he walked in the street, he saw that the cabs, the horses, the streams of people, the building, were all Brahman (God). He could hardly go about his day's business. . . . And when the intensity of the experience abated a little, he saw the world as a dream. . . . It took him a number of days to recover his normal self."

(ii) Narendra's father suddenly died in early 1884 leaving the family in utmost poverty. He requested Sri Ramakrishna to pray to the Divine Mother to remove his poverty, "Sri Ramakrishna bade him pray to Her himself, for She would certainly listen to his prayer. Narendra entered the shrine of Kali. As he stood before the image of the Mother, he beheld her as a living Goddess, ready to give wisdom and liberation. But he thought it was foolish to ask Her for petty worldly things and prayed only for knowledge and renunciation, love and liberation. The Master rebuked him for his failure to ask the Divine Mother to remove his poverty and sent him back to the temple. But Narendra standing in her presence, again forgot the purpose of his coming. Thrice he went to the temple at the bidding of the Master, and thrice he returned, having forgotten in Her presence why he had come. - - - This was a very rich and significant experience for Narendra. It taught him that Sakti, the Divine Power, cannot be ignored in the world and that in the relative plane the need of worshiping a Personal God for protection from misery and distress is imperative."

(iii) "On January 1, 1886, he (Sri Ramakrishna) felt better and came down to the garden for a little stroll. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon, some thirty disciples were in the hall or sitting about under the tree."

After hearing some touching words full of love, "The Master was profoundly moved. He said: 'What more shall I say? I bless you all. Be illumined!' He fell into a spiritual mood. Hearing these words, the devotees, one and all, became overwhelmed with emotion. They rushed to him and fell at his feet. He touched them all, and each received an appropriate benediction. Each of them, at the touch of the Master, experienced ineffable bliss. Some laughed, some wept, some sat down to meditate, and some began to pray.

Some saw light, some had visions of their chosen Ideal, and some felt within their bodies the rush of spiritual power.”

What Does All This Tell Us?

It is clear from Sri Ramakrishna’s life story that he did not have much schooling, did not attend any college or university, did not have any academic qualifications or credentials of any kind, did not read any scriptures, did not write any articles or books, did not give any speeches, and so on. And based on the usual metrics of achievements: absolutely nothing to report. He was merely a temple priest at the Kali temple in Calcutta (modern Kolkata). Absolutely, no credentials of any kind to talk about.

On the other hand, what a powerful spiritual personality, what spiritual achievements, and what spiritual power? One simply cannot fathom or understand it. A truly spiritual Colossus. One who by his mere touch made possible the vision of the ultimate experience of the Reality (the

experience of non-dualistic Vedanta, vision of the Vedantic statement ‘Ekam ev advitiam — there is only One and no second, that is, Brahman alone is). And again, by mere will, made it possible for the future Swami Vivekananda to experience the stone image of Mother Kali as alive and breathing Goddess. That too, not once but three times.

Not only was he a spiritual giant who could not be compared to any previous avatars. He also was truly a spiritual scientist par excellence. That is why Swamiji composed the following shloka for Sri Ramakrishna:

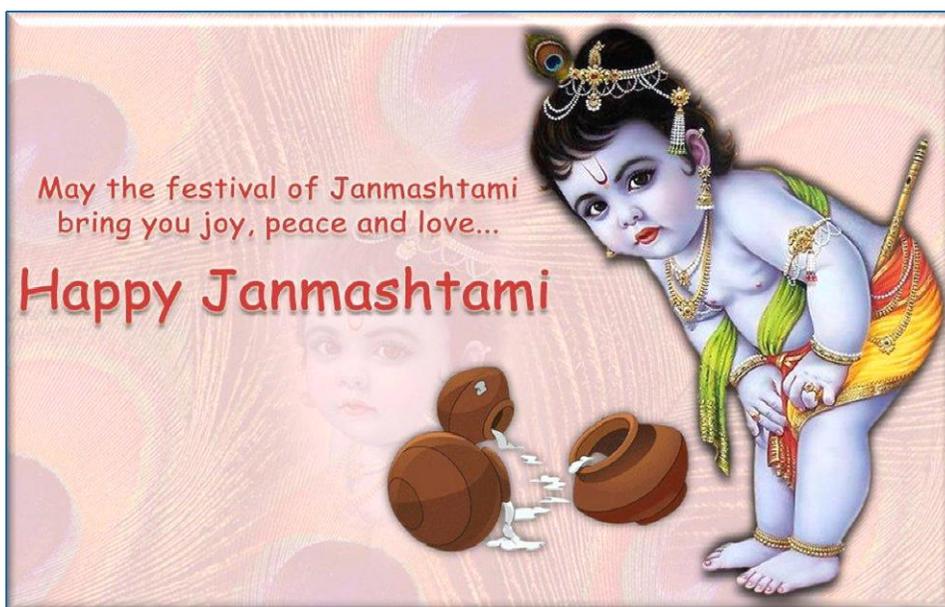
“Sthapakaya ca dharmasya sarva dharma swarupine, Avatara varishthaya Ramakrishnaye te namah — Salutations to Thee, Sri Ramakrishna, who came (into the world) to establish dharma, the embodiment of all the dharmas (all the religions of the world) and the best of the Divine Incarnations.”

To be contd...

Swami Brahmarupananda, visiting guest speaker, from Vedanta Center of Greater Washington DC, is a learned senior monk. He will be one of the prominent speakers in the seminar on Sep 12. He will also deliver a thought provoking Speech on ‘**The Power of Thought**’ on **Sunday, Sep 13, 2015** at 11 am.

Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life - think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success, that is way great spiritual giants are produced.

To succeed, you must have tremendous perseverance, tremendous will. 'I will drink the ocean', says the persevering soul, 'at my will mountains will crumble up.' Have that sort of energy, that sort of will, work hard, and you will reach the goal. - *Swami Vivekananda*



ANNUAL SEMINAR

Annual Seminar will be held on **Saturday, September 12** from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. This year **Swami Bramharupananda**, from Vedanta Centre of Greater Washington DC, USA will be one of the four guest speakers; others being Prof. Ram Murty, Mr Donald Morrison and Prof. Stephen Rupp. Topic for September 12 is '*Creativity and Meditation*' Venue of the Retreat will be **Vedanta Society of Toronto**.
Registration Fee for adult is \$40 and for student it is \$10.

OTHER IMPORTANT EVENTS OF THE MONTH

Janmashtami will be celebrated on September 5 at 6.30 pm. The venue will be Vedanta Society of Toronto.

Swami Brahmarupananda, a senior and erudite monk from the Vedanta Center of Greater Washington DC, will give Sunday lecture on Sep 13 at 11 am. The topic is '**The Power of Thought**'.

REGULAR PROGRAMMES

SCRIPTURE CLASS: Every Friday at 7:30 pm, following the regular evening prayer at 6:00 pm.

Devotional singing and meditation time in the evenings 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.*

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.

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

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***

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.

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.

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

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 Kripamayanda, Ramakrishna Order of India

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 2015

Sunday	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Friday	Saturday
		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u> <i>Janmastami</i> 6:30 pm 
<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>11</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: <i>'Vivekachudamani</i>	<u>12</u> 9:00am ANNUAL SEMINAR <i>'Creativity and Meditation'</i>
<u>13</u> 11am Guest Lecture: <i>'The Power of Thought'</i> by Swami Brahmarupananda, Washington DC <u>1:30 pm</u> VVM	<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 Scripture class: <i>'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'</i>	<u>19</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen 6am to 6pm Vigil
<u>20</u> 11am Lecture: <i>'What is True Self- surrender?'</i>	<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: <i>'Vivekachudamani</i>	<u>26</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen
<u>27</u> 11 am Lecture: <i>'Yoga and Its Aim'</i> <u>1:30pm</u> VVM <u>5pm</u> <i>Ram Nam</i>	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>30</u>			

Update on Building Project

Phase-1 (2015) - Scope consists of Shrine renovation (elevating), Swami Vivekananda statue to be shifted and creation of meditation area, main door area entrance renovation and Resident Swami's room and office to be created upstairs and connecting the two parts of the building to create more space. Contractor was selected through bidding process. City Permit for Phase-1 was received on July-30, 2015. Renovation work has started from August-4, with expected completion of 6 weeks.