



# Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

120 Emmett Ave. Toronto, ON CANADA M6M 2E6

Tel: 416-240-7262 Fax: 416-245-3764

Email: [society@vedantatoronto.ca](mailto:society@vedantatoronto.ca)

Website: [www.vedantatoronto.ca](http://www.vedantatoronto.ca)

## Newsletter April 2009

### Words to Inspire

“ If you do not have holy association outside, then engage your mind with the association of the Lord who is with in you”

- Spiritual Treasures, Page 40 -

### SPIRITUAL TREASURES

(From ‘*Spiritual Treasures*’—pages 37-38)

Dear Devotee,

I received your letter yesterday. I heard about you previously from Swami Shivananda, and now I am pleased to learn that you have decided to sever all worldly ties and intend to devote your whole life to the worship of God. It is good and extremely important to have longing for God, but it is not good to be impatient and despondent because one does not have calmness of mind.

One should consider oneself blessed just to remain thirsting for the Lord. Is it not his immense grace that he has brought you away from worldly life and given you the inclination for sadhana [Spiritual disciplines]? Now, whether your mind becomes calm or not depends on him. It is enough that he is making you practice spiritual disciplines. Pray to the Lord that he may keep you engaged in spiritual pursuits. Why should you pray for peace of mind?

Sri Ramakrishna used to talk about the hereditary farmer. A hereditary farmer continues to plough the land, without caring for drought or rain. He has no other occupation

than farming. Likewise, go on chanting God’s name and consider yourself to be blessed. Offer your happiness and misery, peace and restlessness to God. Be content in whatever way he keeps you. Pray to him so that you can continue your sadhana, then peace will come automatically.

Is God something like spinach or fish in the market that you can buy at a price? Is there any end to sadhana? Or can any one attain God through it? Depending on him, stay at his door—that will be enough. His grace flows of itself. None can attain him by practicing breath control or any other spiritual disciplines.

The one who has attained God has done so through God’s grace. Know it to be a great blessing if God allows you to remain waiting at his door. Spiritual practices mean that one should call on God sincerely, uniting the mind and speech. Never allow any theft in the chamber of your heart [that means no hypocrisy]. That is enough. He will get the rest done through you if needed.

With my best wishes,  
Swami Turiyananda

# Sri Ramakrishna: The Compassionate

Indira Soowamber

(Based on a speech delivered at the Vedanta Society of Toronto on Sri Ramakrishna Birthday Celebration, March 1, 2009)

The life of Sri Ramakrishna abounds with love and compassion for humanity. Sri Ramakrishna's love and compassion is not merely confined to his contemporary devotees and seekers of God but it extends to all generations\_\_\_\_ past, present and future. Out of deep love, he has left an invaluable legacy which finds expression in his own words: *As the children inherit the wealth of their parents, so those who meditate on me will inherit my treasures.* What are his priceless treasures? They are discrimination, renunciation, knowledge, devotion, unselfish love and samadhi.

Sri Ramakrishna's love and compassion for us is so deep that, to make his treasures accessible to us, he has left behind the Ramakrishna Sangha. This Sangha is led by a band of dedicated disciples who strive not only for their own salvation but for the liberation of others as well. The very fact that we are all gathered here in this temple is a concrete example of Thakur's love and boundless compassion. He has given us not only his words but also a place where he is always present and where we can come for solace, guidance and enlightenment. Swami Vivekananda wrote in the Rule Book of Belur Monastery: *The Lord has not given up the Ramakrishna form. Some see him in that form even now and receive instructions from him and can see him if they so desire. Though he is not visible to all, that he is in this Order and guiding it, is a fact of everybody's experience.*

I'll narrate one story that shows that Sri Ramakrishna is ever present and responds to whoever calls on him with sincerity. The story appeared in the Prabhuddha Bharata. Once a person went to a barber for a haircut. Upon seeing him, the barber started saying that God

didn't exist. If He really existed, there would not be so much suffering in the world. The man listened quietly but didn't reply back. After the haircut, he walked down the road and saw a person with long beard and unkempt hair. The man came back to the barber and told him: "I don't think that barbers exist". The barber said: "No, I'm here and I'm a barber. Why are you saying that?" The man replied: "Well, if that is true, why are there people with long beard and unkempt hair?" The barber looked at the man and said: "I'm always here. What can I do if people don't come to me?" Thereupon, the man told the barber: "God does exist, but people don't go to Him, don't look for Him." This story goes to show that Thakur is ever present and it's up to us to call on Him with faith and devotion. Sri Ramakrishna is so compassionate that if we sincerely make one step towards Him, He'll make ninety-nine steps towards us.

The Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi, has also reassured us: *Those who eagerly pray to God will see Him.* She narrates one incident in the life a devotee by the name of Tejachandra Mitra. Sri Ramakrishna used to go to his house frequently. Somebody gave Tejachandra Rs 200 to keep. Unfortunately, one day he was robbed of that money in a tramcar by a pickpocket. He discovered the loss after some time and suffered terrible mental agony. He was not rich enough to make up the amount. He went to the bank of the Ganges and prayed to Sri Ramakrishna with tears in his eyes. As he was weeping, he saw the Master appear before him and saying: "Why do you weep so bitterly?"

The money is under a brick on the bank of the Ganges." Tejachandra quickly located the place, removed the brick and found a bundle of banknotes. This clearly shows Sri Ramakrishna's compassion and love for all

those who sincerely pray to Him. He's ever present and it's up to us to call on Him earnestly.

On this auspicious occasion of Sri Ramakrishna's birth celebration, let us pray that we can feel Thakur's living presence on

the altar. Let us sincerely pray at His Holy Feet that we develop faith and devotion for Him and thereby, become worthy recipients of his boundless love and compassion. In the last phase of his life, Sri Ramakrishna said: *He who sincerely prays to God will certainly come here. He must.*

## **KALI TEMPLE AT DAKSHINESWAR**

At that time there lived in Calcutta a rich widow named Rani Rasmani, belonging to the sudra caste, and known far and wide not only for her business ability, courage, and intelligence, but also for her largeness of heart, piety, and devotion to God. She was assisted in the management of her vast property by her son-in-law Mathur Mohan.

In 1847 the Rani purchased twenty acres of land at Dakshineswar, a village about four miles north of Calcutta. Here she created a temple garden and constructed several temples. Her Ishta, or Chosen Ideal, was the Divine Mother, Kali. The temple garden stands directly on the east bank of the Ganges. The northern section of the land and a portion to the east contain an orchard, flower gardens, and two small reservoirs. The southern section is paved with brick and mortar.

The visitor arriving by boat ascends the steps of an imposing bathing-ghat which leads to the chandni, a roofed terrace, on either side of which stand in a row six temples of Siva. East of the terrace and the Siva temples is a large court, paved, rectangular in shape, and running north and south. Two temples stand in the center of this court, the larger one, to the south and facing south, being dedicated to Kali, and the smaller one, facing the Ganges, to

Radhakanta, that is, Krishna, the Consort of Radha. Nine domes with spires

surmount the temple of Kali, and before it stands the spacious natmandir, or music hall, the terrace of which is supported by stately pillars. At the northwest and southwest corners of the temple compound are two nahabats, or music towers, from which music flows at different times of day, especially at sunup, noon, and sundown, when the worship is performed in the temples. Three sides of the paved courtyard -- all except the west -- are lined with rooms set apart for kitchens, store-rooms, dining-rooms, and quarters for the temple staff and guests. The chamber in the northwest angle, just beyond the last of the Siva temples, is of special interest to us; for here Sri Ramakrishna was to spend a considerable part of his life. To the west of this chamber is a semicircular porch overlooking the river.

In front of the porch runs a foot-path, north and south, and beyond the path is a large garden and, below the garden, the Ganges. The orchard to the north of the buildings contains the Panchavati, the banyan, and the bel-tree, associated with Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual practices. Outside and to the north of the temple compound proper is the kuthi, or bungalow, used by members of Rani Rasmani's family visiting the garden. And north of the temple garden, separated from it by a high wall, is a powder-magazine belonging to the British Government.

**(To be Continued)**

## **PLACES TO SEE IN BELUR MATH**

1. **Sri Ramakrishna Temple :** Originally conceived by Swami Vivekananda, this temple was dedicated on 14 January 1938. It enshrines the sacred relics of Sri Ramakrishna. Architecturally, this temple has an important place among the modern temples of India. It incorporates the motifs of various religions, thus symbolizing the harmony of religions taught by Sri Ramakrishna.
2. **The Old Shrine:** It is situated to the north-east of Sri Ramakrishna Temple. This was the original shrine, where daily worship was conducted from January 1899 till the new temple was consecrated. This shrine awakens the hallowed memory of Swami Vivekananda and other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna who used to worship, meditate and sing devotional songs here.
3. **Swami Vivekananda's Room:** To the southeast of the old shrine stands Swami Vivekananda's room. In this room, the great Swami lived, and here he attained Mahasamadhi on 4 July 1902. Most of the articles preserved in this room were used by him at different places and times. In the courtyard in front of this room stands a mango tree under which Swamiji used to sit on a camp cot and meet visitors and devotees.
4. **Swami Brahmananda Temple :** Swami Brahmananda (1863-1922), whose place among the sixteen monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna is only next to that of Swami Vivekananda, was the first President of the Math and the Mission. The temple, which stands on the spot where Swami Brahmananda's body was cremated, was dedicated in 1924.
5. **Holy Mother Temple:** Overlooking the wide bathing ghat stands the temple of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi (1853-1920). The temple, built on the spot where her mortal remains were consigned to flames in 1920, was consecrated on 21 December 1921. Since the Mother loved the Ganga, her temple faces this sacred river.
6. **Swami Vivekananda Temple :** The temple stands on the spot where Swami Vivekananda's mortal remains were cremated in 1902. Consecrated on 28 January 1924, the temple has in its upper storey an alabaster OM (in Bengali characters). Beside the temple stands a bel (bilva) tree in the place of the original bel tree under which Swami Vivekananda used to sit and near which, according to his wish, his body was cremated.
7. **The Samadhi Enclosure :** The earthly remains of seven of the sixteen direct monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna were cremated here. Their names are engraved on the marble plaque which stands on this spot.
8. **The Old Math:** The place originally belonged to one Nilambar Mukherjee and was known as Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house. It stands further south on the bank of the Ganga. Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi stayed here several times before the Belur Math came into existence. On the first floor terrace of the house, she performed panchatapa, 'five-fire austerity' in 1893. Since the Ramakrishna Math was located in this house from 13th February 1888 to 1st January 1899 before it was permanently shifted to the present premises, it is known as the Old Math.
9. **Ramakrishna Museum:** In this Museum articles and artifacts closely associated with Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda and other direct disciples of the Master have been exhibited.

**You should remember that the heart of the devotee is the abode of God. He dwells, no doubt, in all beings, but He especially manifests Himself in the heart of the devotee. The heart of the devotee is the drawing room of God.**

**- Sri Ramakrishna -**

## SUMMARY OF PAST EVENTS

**Sri Ramakrishna's Birth Anniversary** was celebrated on **Sunday 1st March 2009 at 11:00 am**. The programme consisted bhajans,

puja, homa, and flower offering followed by prasad distribution. More than 300 devotees attended.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Buddha Purnima Celebration** will be held on **Sunday May 10, 2009 at 11:00am**.

The programme will include bhajans, reading, puja, flower offering and prasad distribution.

## 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:** On **Saturday, April 11, 2009**, a vigil consisting of japa and meditation will be observed, from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm. To participate, please call the centre at 416-240-7262.

**RAM NAM:** **Sunday, April 12, 2009 at 5:00 pm**.

### **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 instruction. Appointments for interviews should be made in advance with the Swami at 416-240-7262.

**DAILY MEDITATION:** Meditation is observed at the Centre every morning from

6:00 am to 7:00 am. Devotional singing and meditation is held in the evenings from 6:00 pm to 8:00 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 now served four days (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday) a month at Roncesvalles Food Sharing, 263 Roncesvalles Avenue, Toronto M6R 2L9. 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.

# *Vedanta Society of Toronto*

Minister and Teacher- Swami Kripamayanda,  
Ramakrishna Order of India

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### April 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u> 6:30pm <b>Ram Navami Celebration</b>	<u>4</u>
<u>5</u> 11 am Lecture: <i>'Dealing with Uncertainty'</i> by Prof. V. Kumar Murty	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen	<u>10</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture class: <i>'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'</i>	<u>11</u> Vigil: 6 am to 6 pm
<u>12</u> 11 am Lecture: <i>'Spiritualizing Everyday Life'</i>	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen	<u>17</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture class: <i>'Vivekachudamani</i>	<u>18</u>
<u>RAM NAM</u> 5:00 pm						
<u>19</u> 11 am Lecture: <i>'The Religion of Vedanta'</i>	<u>20</u>	<u>21</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>  <u>NO</u> <u>SCRIPTURE</u> <u>CLASS</u>	<u>25</u>
<u>VVM</u> 1:30 pm						
<u>26</u> 11am Video Swami Yogatmananda's <i>'Can we see God?'</i>	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>		