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Newsletter December 2005

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My child, if you want to have peace of mind, do not find fault with others. Rather, try to see your own faults.

-Sri Sarada Devi

First cast out the beam out of thine own eye; then shalt thou see clearly, to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

-Jesus Christ

Words To Inspire

Jesus is in his solemn mood. He talks of Eternity. He himself is the greatest economist of his time. He succeeded in economizing time and space - he transcended them. It is to him at his best that a disciple comes running, kneels down, and asks: 'Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit Eternal Life?'

Jesus said: 'Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God. Thou knowest the commandments: do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, defraud not, honour thy father and mother.'

Disciple: 'Master, all these I have observed from my youth.'

Jesus: 'One thing thou lackest. Go thy way, sell whatever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven - come, take up the cross and follow me. How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God.'

-The Message of Jesus Christ

I asked the Holy Mother, "How shall I lead a spiritual life, Mother?" She said, "Spend your days as you are doing now. Pray to Him earnestly and remember Him always."

Disciple: 'Mother, the fact that even great men become degraded frightens me terribly.'

Mother: When a person has enjoyable things all around him, their influence naturally affects him. My son, don't look at a woman, even if it be only a figure made of wood. Avoid the company of women.

Disciple: Men can't do anything on their own. It is He who is making them do all that they do.

Mother: True it is that He is causing men to do everything. But do they have that understanding? Being filled with egotism, they think they are the doers of everything and that they don't have to depend on God. Those who rely on Him are protected by Him from all dangers."

-The Gospel of Holy Mother

The Holy Mother and the Secret of Her Holiness

(Based on a talk delivered by Swami Baneshananda, Head of Vedanta Gesellschaft, Germany. He is also an ex-editor of the Ramakrishna Order's English Monthly, The Vedanta Kesari.)

I will try to discuss a few points from Mother's life. It is very difficult to speak on the life and message of the Holy Mother. I have all along heard this sentence from many senior monks many a time. Then I finally found the reason behind such hesitation. The topic is difficult because, to a casual reader, her life seems so ordinary. Of course, ordinariness does not pose any difficulty to understand a thing if it does not go with unfathomable sublimity. That is what is the case when we look at the life of the Mother. Her life is so commonplace, yet so sublime, nay, divine.

If we survey the spiritual history of the world, we come across such promises by God, a male principle, that he incarnates to this world to rejuvenate the spiritual power for the good of humanity. In the Gita, for example, Sri Krishna says that when there is a decline of religion or spirituality he incarnates himself to protect the pious and establish the spirit of religion. This promise he has fulfilled many times.

Similarly, in the Devi Maahatmyam, or Chandi, there is a promise given by the mother power, the Divine Mother. She also says that she would incarnate in this world again and again to help her children to tackle the problems their life. But, to our knowledge, we don't find any such instance to prove that she has fulfilled her promise. If we look at the lives of Shaktis, the Mother Power, who came with the incarnations like, Radha with Krishna, Sita with Rama, Vishnupriya with Chaitanya and even Yashodhara with Buddha, we won't find that this big power, the Shakti, has ever manifested in them. Rather we always see a picture of an ever-lamenting Mother Power. She suffered in all the ages. Perhaps to compensate for the sad episodes in earlier ages, Sri Ramakrishna came in this age. His life is a life that is wholly dedicated to Mother. He went on crying for God with the sweetest word "Mother"—by this small word the human vocabulary has been sanctified. Sri Ramakrishna was a worshipper of the Divine Mother in the form of Kali. He was employed as a worshipper under a lady, Rani Rasmani. And his guru in the path of Tantra was a woman saint, Bhairavi Brahmani.

In order to help the Mother to fulfill her long-overdue-promise, as it were, Sri Ramakrishna came. But, it was not possible for Sri Ramakrishna to express the motherhood wholly in and through a male body. That is why Holy Mother says, "Sri Ramakrishna had an attitude of a mother towards this world. But it is not possible to manifest this attitude of motherhood wholly through a male body. That is why he has transferred the responsibility on me to fulfill that mission." This statement is very significant. If we look at Holy Mother's life, we would be able to prove it. Sri Ramakrishna himself said that she was the manifestation of the Divine Mother in flesh and blood. Once, while doing some personal service to Sri Ramakrishna Holy Mother asked him, "How do you look upon me?" Sri Ramakrishna's reply was unique in the spiritual history of the world: "The mother [Goddess Kali] who is there in the temple, and the mother (His own mother, Chandramani Devi) who has given birth to this body, is now serving me." Similarly, we would see that Holy Mother also recognized Sri Ramakrishna as the manifestation of the Divine Motherhood. After Sri Ramakrishna's death, Holy Mother came and fell on his body wailing, "O Mother Kali where have you gone, leaving me behind?"

It is a saga of an incarnation of the Mother Power in two bodies. Therefore, it seems that the promise in the Devi Maahatmyam has been for once fulfilled by the Divine Mother in and through the life of Holy Mother. There are two words in Sanskrit which mean and describe "mother". One is "maataa", the other is "Janani". Janani relates to a mother who gives birth to children. Janani janmadaatri: she who gives birth to children. And maataa also means mother; but this word is not connected to the biological aspect of motherhood. It is more a mental thing, an attitude. In this sense, Holy Mother says that Sri Ramakrishna had the attitude of a mother, to the world. In one of his lectures, a saint told, "the male in the female and the female in the male". It means that there are two attitudes in each human being. Somewhere one is manifested more and somewhere else less. In the Gita Sri Krishna says, "I am the mother of this world." Therefore, motherhood is not narrowed down to the biological phenomena. It transcends that and goes to the mind and then to the spiritual level. A man also can have this attitude. If we look at Holy Mother's life we see that she was never a mother because she did not have her own children from her own body. She was a mother in the second sense: meaning "maataa". When we are able to cross the limits of the physical or biological bodies we are able to become universal. Only on the mental plane can we accept all. Physically there are limitations, differences and restrictions.

Now let us ask us a question: What is so special about this Mother? One devotee had asked her: Mother, you look so down-to-earth; why do people call you 'goddess'? Mother threw a challenge—she was so innocent, but she is never lacking in challenges. She said, "Show me another [ordinary] woman like me." Yes, she is ordinary—but extraordinarily ordinary. We cannot find a peer for such a commonplace life. It is common knowledge that we all try to pose as extra-ordinary in some way or the other. When people say "You are great." we give a smiling nod. Then starts the irony and the ordeal. We spent much of our energy and life to protect this vain extra-ordinariness.

In the life of one of our monks it happened: He was young. He used to love the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda and would read it day and night. His mother one day gave him a small book on Holy Mother and asked him to read it. But he did not read it for a long time. His mother had to return the book to her friend. So she wanted her son to read the book soon. The son read it through, returned the book to his mother and asked, "Ma, I have read the book; but I ask you one question, 'What is the difference between this Mother and you?'" It is very difficult to find out any difference. You look at your own mother. You will find, she is like Holy Mother. Ever toiling, always loving, never complaining. This is the same attitude as that of the Holy Mother; then what is special about her? But the young man's mother gave a significant reply. She said, "The difference is that your mother will die; but she (Holy Mother) never dies." We have seen that our grandparents used to call her "mother", their children used to call her "mother", and now their children call her "mother". She is mother of all. It is so extraordinary. Since she did not have any children of her own body, she could cross the limit of physical existence. She could embrace all, because she could sacrifice something which is very small compared to this all-encompassing motherhood. Socrates was a great philosopher. He went around the marketplace of Athens, and came out with a momentous discovery. He said, "There are so many things in the marketplace which I do not need." As soon as the limitation is broken one becomes universal.

Just a few instances I want to give from Holy Mother's life. It is dangerous to do so. Why? If we look at those instances we will discover two risks. I will discuss those later.

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One instance is very famous. When Mother was in her deathbed she had delivered her last message: "Learn to make the whole world your own." Afterwards she said to one of her disciples, "My child, please tell my children—those who came to me in the past, those who are there now, and those who will come in the future—that I leave my blessings for all of them to share." A lady, not so educated in the stupid sense of the world, could embrace the past, present and future in her motherhood. I believe it is difficult for our mothers to say this.

Another very touching incident is there. The "mad-aunt" shouted at Holy Mother, "You 'all-destroyer', you should die!" Sharp came Mother's protest: "My child, you may use any word to abuse me, but do not dare to call me 'all-destroyer'. I have children all over the creation; it will harm them." Mother's protest was not against mad-aunt's curse that she should die; she didn't mind that. Her protest was against this word 'all-destroyer'. Surely our own mothers cannot say this.

In her lifetime itself Holy Mother was being worshipped as the Divine Mother. Once on her birthday, the devotees thronged to Jayrambati to pay their obeisance to the Mother. There was a long queue. Mother was sitting at her place and greeting the devotees. After some time Mother went inside. She was getting late to come out. Some lady devotees went inside to see what had happened to her. They saw, Mother was cooking a diet for a patient in the house. It was a celebration on her birthday. She did not forget the patient.

Such instances can be cited from her life in hundreds. But we are afraid to do so. Why? Because we will suffer two risks. One, if we do it we won't be able to find the image of Holy Mother in our own mothers. And, two, we will be afraid of Holy Mother. We will lose her in her greatness.

By what means could she become the mother of all? It is by love, as explained by Naarada. In his Bhaktisutras the great sage Narada used a word "Prema". Prema is divine love and Kaama is worldly love. Any selfish love, a love with desire, is called Kaama. It is a noun. Any selfish love is a noun. Noun means, you can buy it from the marketplace for \$200 or so. But Prema is a verb. It goes out from the aspirant to God. Mother became the mother of all because she had Prema or divine love for all. She never expected from anybody love in exchange of her love. She went on giving and giving. It is a verb. That makes her so powerful and different.

Is it possible for us to have that love? Sri Ramakrishna wants to say that we have that love in us. But we don't know it. He gives three analogies for love, they can be both Kaama and Prema. (i) The love of the parent for the child. It is at the spiritual level. (ii) The love between husband and wife is at the mental level. And (iii) the love of a rank materialist for his possessions is at the physical level.

There are three types of Prema also. Sri Ramakrishna wants to say: when you give a u-turn to all these love (Kaama) what you get is divine love. Holy Mother says that these things termed as Kaama should be there; but with a divine interpretation or dimension. Sri Ramakrishna's examples look very simple but they are very deep and meaningful. Look at the love of the mother to her baby. The mother loves the baby. If the love is at the physical level, then it is called Kaama. It is explained by Freud. But parents do not love the dead body of their child. They love a living child. Give a u-turn to this love. We love each other, because there are more than one soul involved in this relation. If you look at the souls, they reside in two bodies and they are separately working out their own karmas. Therefore, the parents love towards their children is spiritual. If it is at the spiritual level it is called Prema. Then it becomes a cause for our liberation. How to do that? It is the path of Jnaana Yoga. Discriminate. Is this a love between two biological, or physical bodies? So on and so forth. We say "yours in the lord". That means we are connected with you, not directly, but through the lord. Then only we are yours. This is the spiritual dimension of love as Prema.

Then the next example is of the love between husband and wife. There you see two minds are united through love. In the above example, biologically the child's body is at least an extension of the parents' bodies. But here there is no connection between the two bodies so to say. But we find a connection through the mind. If this connection remains at the biological level, then it is the other name of suffering. In that case we will find that even at old age couples divorce. If it is at the mental level at least, then there will be more understanding. When it gets a spiritual dimension it comes along the path of bhakti. Holy Mother told Sri Ramakrishna that she had come to join him in his spiritual path. Upaasana or devotion to God is done by the mind. The mind which binds us to the world can help us to get freedom from the bondage of worldliness.

The third example is of the love of a materialist for his possessions, which are material things like money, land etc. There is no connection through the mind or the soul between a man and matter. How should we give a u-turn to it? By work as worship. With your money, with your wealth, with your material possessions help the children of God; help his work.

These three put together makes an intense love called Prema. Sri Ramakrishna says that it is a very dangerous thing. Because it will take us away from this world. ... And take us to God. Well, to tell the truth, we are afraid to allow it to happen. We don't want to be liberated. We want to hold onto both, the world and God. That creates the problem. In one of his poems in the Gitaanjali, Rabindranath Tagore has given a beautiful description about this fear of ours. He says, "My debts are large, my failures great, my shame secret and heavy. Yet when I come to ask for my good, I quake in fear, lest it be granted!"

Another question also arises. Are we really competent to give a u-turn to all our propensities? Then we look at Holy Mother. What does she say? She is the most practical of all spiritual teachers. If we survey the whole spiritual history of the world we will not find another spiritual personality who is more practical than the Mother. One devotee asks Holy Mother, "Do I need to practise Japa?" It's a very logical question because the Divine Mother herself in the form of Holy Mother has initiated him/her. Hence there is the necessity for further spiritual practices? Holy Mother's answer was so simple yet so sublime. She said, "Why not? God has given you such beautiful fingers." Her words carry a lot of meaning. Sometimes in the past I read a very inspiring quotation. One person said, "I used to complain to my parents that I had no good shoes, until I saw a man who had no legs." Mother wanted to say: Are we not too blessed that God has created us with so much privileges? Do we deserve such beautiful fingers? Any kind of accident would have happened before our birth to deprive us of these fingers. If we know the biological evolution of a child in mother's womb, we would be astonished to know that it is a great miracle that almost all of us are born as a normal human being.

So, if we get a glimpse of mother's life and read her life from this perspective, we will get more than what is necessary for a single individual to free himself/herself from the fetters of this world. It is abundantly given to us, but because we find it so ordinary, we fail to find the charm of sublimity in this ordinariness. That is the problem. What an irony of fate!

Quantum Leap

Why I Love Swami Vivekananda

"A few heart-whole, sincere, and energetic men and woman can do more in a year than a mob in a century." These words spoken by Swami Vivekananda himself embody his heart-whole, sincere, and energetic efforts to propagate the Hindu spiritual culture throughout the world. But where does one go: to the West of course. From his first public appearance at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago where he represented Hinduism, Swami Vivekananda had been highly successful in asserting the foundation of Hinduism - the Vedanta philosophy. Both Swami Vivekananda and this ancient philosophy were well received, becoming increasingly popular, especially with Americans.

But what was it about Swami Vivekananda and his message that was so inspiring and appealing? Though there are several ways to answer this question, there seem to be three things that stand out above the rest: Vivekananda's great knowledge of the East and West, his just attitude, and finally his fearlessness.

Like many Indian children, Swami Vivekananda had been raised on traditional Indian culture and philosophy. Not only did he have a vast knowledge of India but as a young man, Vivekananda also went on to study Western philosophy and European history. This would become a great tool in his travels to the West. Vedanta itself is very much universal in its teachings and is applicable to all cultures, religions, and countries. And by understanding the Western mentality, Swami Vivekananda was able to use the Vedanta philosophy to explain Hinduism in such a way that it would be especially interesting to his Western audience.

From a very young age, Swami Vivekananda always believed that no one person was better than another. When visiting his father's office, Vivekananda noticed that separate tobacco pipes were kept for separate castes, as was instructed by orthodox Hindu tradition. Once Vivekananda smoked from all the pipes, including the one used by the Muslims. When scolded, Swami Vivekananda replied, 'I cannot see what difference it makes.' Another example of this positive quality in Swami Vivekananda is his visit to Khetri at the Maharaja's palace. The maharaja invited Swami Vivekananda to an evening of entertainment where a girl who was deemed impure by society was to sing. At first, Vivekananda refused to attend the function, but upon hearing the singer's lamentation, Vivekananda replied, 'Mother, I am guilty. I was about to show you disrespect by refusing to come to this room. But your song awakened my consciousness.'

One thing that is especially inspirational about Swami Vivekananda is his fearlessness. In today's world of terrorist attacks and even violence in cities, fear is something that has been instilled into everyone's minds. But it is also something that Swami Vivekananda did not have, even from a very young age. As a small boy, Vivekananda would climb a flowering tree belonging to a neighbour with his friends and pluck the flowers. The owner of this tree became irritated with Vivekananda's behaviour and one day told his friends that there was a ghost living in the tree and it would wring the necks of intruders. Vivekananda's friends believed the man and steered clear of the tree. But Vivekananda continued to play on the tree and persuaded his friends to join him once again saying, 'what silly fellows you all are! See, my neck is still here. The old man's story is simply not true. Don't believe what others say unless you yourself know it to be true.' Another instance of this can be seen in Swami Vivekananda's travels in Varanasi. One day he was being pursued by a troop of monkeys when a wandering monk called out 'face the brutes.' Swami Vivekananda immediately turned around and gave the monkeys a defiant look scaring them away. Vivekananda later went on to use the famous phrase 'face the brutes' to encourage people to stand up to the fears and hardships of life.

The above qualities are only a few of the many positive aspects of Swami Vivekananda and are only a few of the reasons why so many people around the world love him. Swami Vivekananda will forever remain an exemplary international role model for both the young and the old.

By Jahnvi Ramakrishnan, Age 17.

(This was a short talk given as part of the Swami Vivekananda Statue Dedication Ceremony on September 11th, 2005 held at the Centre.)

Past Events

On November 1st, the Centre celebrated **Kali Puja** with a special programme of worship, bhajans, flower-offering and prasad. Over 250 devotees attended the spiritually uplifting event.

Upcoming Events

Christmas Eve Celebration, Saturday, December 24th, 2005 6 pm.

Sri Sarada Devi's Birthday Celebration, Sunday, December 25th, 2005, 11 am.

Kalpataru Day, Sunday, January 1st, 2006, 6 pm.

Shiva Ratri, Sunday, February 26th, 2006, 6 pm.

Sri Ramakrishna, Sunday, March 5th, 2006, 11 am.

Regular Services

Winter break from December 26th to January 7th - No Regular Services.

Daily Meditation

Meditation is held at the Centre every morning from 6 am to 7 am. Devotional singing and meditation is held every evening from 6 pm to 7 pm.

Interviews and Instruction

Swami Kripamayananda grants interviews to those interested in knowing more about Vedanta, Indian Philosophy, and spirituality and its practices. Please call in advance and make an appointment.

Sunday Service (Not held during Winter break)

Lectures are given every Sunday at 11 am by Swami Kripamayananda or distinguished speakers. The service includes devotional singing, reading, meditation and refreshments. **Please use front entrance.**

Scripture Class (Not held during Winter Break)

Scripture classes are held every Friday at 7:30 pm. **Please use upstairs kitchen entrance.**

Bookstore

The Bookstore carries selected titles from Ramakrishna - Vivekananda literature, as well as other material related to Vedanta and Indian Philosophy. Please call for store hours.

For other services, please go to our [events](#) page.

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