



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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"I tell you one thing: If you want peace, do not find fault with others. Rather learn to see your own faults. Learn to make the world your own. No one is a stranger, my child; the whole world is your own." -- Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi

Words to Inspire

(from The Sermon on the Mount According to Vedanta, by Swami Prabhavananda, p. 113-15)

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? (Gospel of Matthew 7:1-29)

Almost everyone has a tendency to gossip, to criticize and judge others. We relish gossiping and criticizing others because it swells our own sense of ego. Behind our criticism is the feeling, "I don't have this weakness. I am greater than they are." Usually, the weaknesses we seem to see in another person exist only in our own impure imagination. How many of us can really look into the depths of another human being and see all the motives which are prompting him to act in a particular way? Yet we are eager to judge and impute motives—evil motives!

Gossip may seem very innocent yet it causes immense harm in human society, and particularly to those who indulge in it. Those who dwell on the faults of others develop the same faults themselves; for in the mind of every individual both good and bad impressions and tendencies are stored up, and if you criticize another person for a certain fault, similar tendencies which were dormant in

your own subconscious mind are released and become active. If, on the other hand, you make a habit of seeing the good in others, your own good tendencies are released and strengthened. So for his own sake as well as for the sake of others, the spiritual seeker must not criticize, gossip, or judge. "If you want peace of mind, do not find fault with others," taught Sri Sarada Devi, a great woman saint of Bengal, "Learn to make the whole world your own. No one is a stranger; this whole world is yours."

In India we have a saying that the fly sits on the filth as well as on the honey, but that the bee seeks only the honey and avoids the filth. And so one of the first vows given to the religious aspirant is, "May I follow the example of the bee, not that of the fly!" As we progress in spiritual life, we learn to see the good in everyone, we learn to have love, sympathy, and compassion for all. Real holy men have that attitude towards mankind: if you have the least drop of goodness in you, they see an ocean of goodness within that drop—not because they are overly optimistic, but because they see the possibility of future growth, and they emphasize it. They know that through the grace of God a man may be freed in one moment from all sin and bondage. Swami Brahmananda used to say, "Heaps of cotton can be burnt with one matchstick; similarly, one gracious glance from God can wipe out mountains of sins. The man who appears as a sinner today may be a saint tomorrow."

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT AT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2006

Swami Kripamayanda

The Annual General Meeting is a time to review the activities of the Society over the past year. But it is also a time to reflect on the Society as a whole. Why are we here? What is our duty? What is our future? We are asking these questions as a community of friends and members of the Society. So the questions really mean why is the Society here? What is its duty? What is its future? And we can add to that, as individuals, what is our responsibility to the Society? We should also reflect on the way we benefit from the Society.

The answer to all of these questions depends on one name: Sri Ramakrishna. His advent was unique. He appeared at a time when India had lost faith in the teachings of the ancient masters. Scriptures were considered to be mythology and imagination. Worship and rituals were meant for gratifying worldly aspirations. The conventional wisdom was that one should reject these, get a proper “scientific” Western education and try to get a good job. Sitting in the capital of British India, the centre where this kind of thinking was strongest, Sri Ramakrishna defied all of these.

Sri Ramakrishna dared to base his life on the scriptures. He rejected formal education, not because he didn't value knowledge, but he didn't appreciate the “bread-winning” motive behind such education. He had no interest in a job in the usual sense, not because he was lazy and didn't want to work, but because he felt that it was motivated by the stomach rather than by a desire for truth. Yet, his disciples were for the most part, highly educated youngsters as well as people who held important and influential positions in society. Why did these people, who according to conventional wisdom were already well set in society, come and sit at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna?

It was because he had discovered for himself, and was able to show to others, that spirit is real. God is real, religion is real. Sri Ramakrishna proved by his life that the teachings of the scriptures are true, and not fiction or imagination. When the educated Narendra asked him ‘Sir, have you seen God?’ he could answer emphatically and clearly ‘Yes, I have seen God’. Not only that, but he

said ‘I see God more clearly than I see you’. Notice the present tense that he used. It was not a past experience, but a constant experience in the present. Finally, he also said ‘I can show Him to you also’. In other words, it is an experience open to anyone who will follow the disciplines.

Why are we here? It is to realize God. It may sound funny to some. We are so used to thinking that God realization is for a few souls, and the rest of us come here and hope that in some magical and mystical way, we will benefit from their realization to solve our problems in the world. We may completely deny that our aim is to realize God and we may even say that we are totally unfit because we lack strength either at the moral and ethical level, or the physical or psychological level. We may say that our body and mind are so restless that we cannot think of ourselves as spiritual beings at all. We may not use the word, but we may consider ourselves to be ‘sinners’ or unworthy of entering the realms of spirituality.

And yet, Sri Ramakrishna is very clear in his teachings. Vedanta is very clear in its teachings. The Upanishads are very clear in their teachings. The Upanishads say:

*Srnavanta visve, amrtasya putrah
Ayadhamani divyani tasthanuh*

Listen, O world! Listen, you who are the children of immortality. There is no qualification there. There is no exclusion there. Spirituality is your birthright. The teachers ask you to claim what is yours.

Swami Vivekananda said “Ye are the Children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth – sinners? It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal...” But we are not conscious of that divinity. Everything in our life seems to point in the opposite direction. How can we reconcile this? It is to help us to reconcile this apparent contradiction, to show us that it is in fact not a contradiction but that spirit is real, and that in

fact, it is the only thing that is real that institutions like the Vedanta Society of Toronto exist. This is a spiritual University. Students go to a University to master a certain body of knowledge. No, they learn also about how to learn. Similarly, the Vedanta Society is a place where we go to get training and help in realizing spirit and living in the awareness of spiritual reality.

The Vedanta Society is not a social club, but the feeling of community and the performance of service to the community can be important aids to us in our spiritual struggle. It is not an intellectual society, but the study of spiritual ideas, in our tradition and in other traditions, can be an important aid to us in our spiritual struggle. We are not a temple or church or mosque or synagogue, in the usual sense. But we do perform worship here as that is an important aid to spiritual growth. We are not a meditation center, but many hours of meditation – individual and collective – are done here because that is an essential discipline in spiritual life. We are not any of these, and we are all of these. In order to realize our innate divinity, we take the help of all of these techniques. Swami Vivekananda summarized the whole process very nicely:

“Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within, by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy – by one, or more, or all of these – and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.”

We have a Society and there is a formal structure, but this organization is not the essential thing. The important thing is that everyone of us, whether monastic or lay member, should be striving to realize our spiritual nature. We have an Annual Meeting, an Executive Committee and so on. All of these are necessary and good. But let us not lose ourselves there. Above all of us, there is the power of Sri Ramakrishna who is guiding our actions and guiding this Society.

To be a member of the Vedanta Society is to make a sincere effort to realize God. It is a very, very lofty ideal. But it is not too lofty that it is

unattainable. Sri Ramakrishna has given an assurance: “Verily, verily I say unto you that whosoever think of me, shall inherit my wealth, even as a son inherits his father’s wealth. And my wealth consists of devotion and knowledge, discernment and renunciation.”

Surely, it is by the grace of God that we are associated with Ramakrishna Mission and the Vedanta Society of Toronto. These organizations exist only to help us realize our spiritual nature. Blessed are those who help these organizations. When you help the Vedanta Society, you are helping people who are coming now and those who will come in the future. As long as the Society exists, there will be a place for sincere spiritual aspirants to come and get encouragement and guidance. It is said that those who serve the devotees of God are themselves the greatest devotees.

I want to thank everyone for your continued support. Your selfless service and sacrifice for the Society will surely bear fruit. Swami Pramathanandaji used to say that Sri Ramakrishna is not a miser or an ungrateful person. When you serve the devotees, you will be amply rewarded. He himself surrendered himself completely to Sri Ramakrishna and worked until the end to serve the devotees. Even with his dying breath, his concern was for the devotees and the Society. Remembering that kind of ideal, we should also dedicate ourselves.

This is why the twin ideal of the Ramakrishna Mission formulated by Swami Vivekananda is ‘for our own spiritual evolution and realization, as well as for the good of the world’. In closing, I want to remind you that our ideal is God realization, nothing less will do. The Society exists to help people to realize God. When you help the Society, you are helping many people whom you may not know. You are also helping yourselves through selfless service. Thank you very much for your continued support. I pray to Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda that they may bless, guide and inspire all of us and the Society as a whole so that we may realize God in this very life and be a blessing to ourselves and to the world.

Jai Sri Guru Maharaj Ji ki Jai!

Swami Ishanananda on Holy Mother

Once at the time of Durga Puja, Holy Mother gave me the responsibility of buying garments for her nephews and nieces. I bought for them all only Swadeshi (India-made) clothes. The girls did not like this at all and began to order as they pleased. I got irritated and said, "All that is foreign staff. Do you think I will buy foreign goods?" The Holy Mother was sitting on one side. She said, smiling, "My dear, they too (foreigner) are my children. I have to run the house including everybody. Could I be one-sided? Please bring the things to suit their taste." Subsequently I observed that whenever any foreign articles had to be bought the Holy Mother would get them through others rather than tell me. It was not in her nature to hurt anyone's, feelings.

Rashbehari Maharaj and I were sitting on either side of the Holy Mother's bed one day. She placed her hand on my chest and back and said, "Ah! So many women are here, but no one's body is so cool. These boy's and their bodies – how cool they are! My hand is soothed." In the travails of illness the Holy Mother used to look for Sarat Maharaj a great deal. Getting the news, Sarat Maharaj arrived there accompanied by Dr. Kanjilal and went straight to the Holy Mother. The Mother was then restless with a burning sensation all over her body and was stretching her arms this way and that. Sarat Maharaj saw that and taking off his shirt sat by her bed. The Holy Mother put her hand on his back and said, "Ah! My whole body is cooled.

Sarat's body is like a cool slab." Sarat Maharaj said, "Look now Mother. All of us have come, and now you must get well." In reply the Mother said, "Yes, my dear; if Kanjilal gives a little medicine I shall immediately get well." Sarat Maharaj was very happy to hear these words. Within a few days, she was free from fever, and she began to take her normal food. One day Sarat Maharaj said, "Mother, this time we shall leave you here. I would like to take you with me to Calcutta. The Holy Mother also did not seriously object to this but said, "My dear. I must go to Jayrambati and start on an auspicious day." Sarat Maharaj agreed to this and set about fixing the day for going to Jayrambati.

In this connection another incident comes to my mind. I was then at Jayrambati with Holy Mother. One day I returned to Jayrambati from koalpara with an old woman carrying a headload of things for me. The old woman put down her load and bowed down at the Holy Mothers' feet. "What is the matter, my daughter?" she said. "You have not come this side for so many days?" The old woman replied in a piteous voice, "Mother, now-a-days I am in great difficulties. Searching for food, I go to different places. And so, when there is an occasion to bring a load here, the gentlemen do not find me in time. A few days back, my young earning son passed away." The Holy Mother was much affected to hear this and her eyes were filled with tears.

Copies of the Vedanta Society's 2005-06 Annual Report, Financial Report, and the 2005 AGM Minutes (distributed to attendees at the Vedanta Society's 2006 Annual General Meeting on November 19) are available to any member of the Society. Interested members are requested to contact the Vedanta Society.



BELUR MATH NEWS

The name of the *Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute* (RKMVERI), Deemed University has been changed to *RAMAKRISHNA MISSION VIVEKANANDA UNIVERSITY*. Its address is: P.O. Belur Math, Dist Howrah, West Bengal 711 202.

Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore conducted a written quiz competition on Sri Ramakrishna's life and message in which 91,000 students from 715 schools spread in 24 districts of Karnataka participated.

SUMMARY OF PAST EVENTS

Kali Puja was celebrated on **Saturday, October 21st, at 6:30 pm**. The programme included puja, devotional songs, pushpanjali and distribution of prasad. Close to 250 devotees and friends attended.

The Vedanta Society of Toronto held its **Annual General Meeting** on **Sunday, November 19, at 11:00 am**.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Public celebration of the **Birth Anniversary of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi** will be held at the Vedanta Society on **Sunday, December 17, 2006 at 11 am**, with a special programme of worship, bhajans, pushpanjali and homa, followed by distribution of prasad.

The Vedanta Society will celebrate **Christmas Eve** on **Sunday, December 24, 2006 at 6:00 pm**, with a special programme of worship and devotional singing, followed by prasad distribution.

New Year's Eve celebrations will be held on **Sunday, December 31, 2006, from 9:30 pm to**

midnight, with bhajans, meditation, Arati and prayer chants. Refreshments will be served.

Kalpataru Utsav will be celebrated on **Monday, January 1, 2007 at 6:00 pm**.

Public celebration of the **Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda** will be held at the Vedanta Society on **Sunday, January 14, 2007 at 11 am**, with a special programme of worship, bhajans, pushpanjali and homa, followed by distribution of prasad.

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, December 9, 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, December 10, 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: This month, the Soup Kitchen will be held on Thursday, December 21. 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 collections, as well as other Vedantic materials

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Minister and Teacher – Swami Kripamayanda, Ramakrishna Order of India

DECEMBER 2006

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					<u>1</u> Scripture Class: Tattvabodha at 7.30 pm	<u>2</u>
<u>3</u> Lecture by Guest Speaker at 11 am	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u> The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna at 7.30 pm	<u>9</u> Vigil 6 am to 6 pm.
<u>10</u> Lecture: <i>How to become pure</i> at 11 am Vidya Mandir: at 1.30 pm Ram Nam at 5 pm	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u> Life & teachings of Swami Shivananda at 7.30 pm	<u>16</u>
<u>17</u> Celebration of HolyMother's Birth Anniversary at 11 am.	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>21</u> Soup kitchen at 9 am	<u>22</u> Scripture Class: Tattvabodha at 7.30 pm	<u>23</u>
<u>24</u> Christmas Eve Celebration at 6 pm	<u>25</u> WINTER RECESS BEGINS	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>
<u>31</u> New Year's Eve Celebration from 9:30 pm						

Special Sunday Service: Dec 3, 2006 at 11am

Her Excellency Mrs. Shyamala B. Cowsik, High Commissioner of India to Canada,
will speak on *“Swami Vivekananda's Contribution to India and the World”*.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

*The Vedanta Society of Toronto would like to wish all of our members and friends
a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.*

May peace and spiritual blessings be yours in the coming year and always.

