



Newsletter February 2006

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'Therefore, do thou always perform obligatory actions, without attachment; by performing action without attachment, the human being attains to the highest.'

- Bhagavad Gita

Words To Inspire

Holy Mother was an exemplar of her own teaching: 'One must always do some work. Only through work can one remove the bondage of work. Total detachment comes later. One should not be without work even for a moment. Work helps one to fend off idle thoughts. If one is without work such thoughts rush into one's mind.' Right from childhood, her's was an active life. It was this active life that made her retain her bearings when people in her village murmured about her husband having gone mad in Dakshineswar.

In Dakshineswar she had a busy routine from 3 am. She cooked untiringly for Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples in that tiny octagonal room in the Nahabat, the distance between whose opposite sides measured hardly eight feet. No work was small or insignificant for her. Even inanimate things including the much-cited broom and basket received her respect.

Her close companion Yogin-Ma wondered where was the all-renouncing Sri Ramakrishna and where was Mother steeped in worldly problems. Sri Ramakrishna appeared to her in a vision and showed the corpse of a newborn baby floating on the Ganga. He asked her 'Can the Ganga ever be polluted? Know her as such. She is not different from me.'

Sister Devamata had basked in her purifying presence. She has this to say about her:

"Those who had the rare blessing of living with the Holy Mother learned that religion was a sweet, natural, joyous thing; that purity and holiness were tangible realities; that the odour of sanctity was literally a sweet perfume overlaying and destroying the foulness of material selfishness. Compassion, devotion, God-union were her very nature; one scarcely knew that she possessed them. It was through the soothing benediction of a word or touch that one sensed their presence."

- *Prabuddha Bharata, from the January 2004 Issue, Editorial*

Address of the President

(Given by Swami Kripamayananda at the Vedanta Society of Toronto during the Annual General Meeting on November 21st, 2005)

We are all assembled here, at the altar of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda, Lord Buddha and Jesus Christ, all united in our hearts. Our common aspirations, our reverent faith and intense love for the holy ideas and spiritual truths as exemplified and propagated by the great personalities, are all central factors in bringing us here. The love perfected and manifested by the Great Teachers continues to travel far and wide to pervade the world. It is only spiritual love that has the power to unite those who have extremely different perspectives. The goal may be the same, but the methods, practices and perspectives may be distinctly varied. But love for the principles of truth, love and peace have the power to break all potential barriers or divisions. It is this power that we ourselves can celebrate and be proud to possess. For, is this not an aspect of spiritual growth? Just to gather together and discuss the details of our Society's activities, community presence and function in relation to the spiritual development of its members and friends gives reason to bring forth positive feelings of the Society's existence.

The entire undertaking of managing an organization such as this, rests on the dedicated and continuous reflection of how we communicate with, understand and accept one another.

Unity is strength - it enables us to stand together. Without sangha, the strength and vitality of our organization would be greatly diminished. Unity helps us to progress: both collectively and individually.

As we heard in the messages of our senior swamis - 'Meetings are the occasions for us to pause, take stock of what has been achieved, and also to plan for the future.'

Since we started the Vedanta Society of Toronto in 1968 through the efforts of a few dedicated, inspired and capable devotees and with the blessed presence of Swami Ranganathanandaji and Swami Bhasyanandaji, we are moving forward. In the mean time many have nurtured the Society through their love and labour. Securing the Centre's affiliation with the Ramakrishna Math and Mission and getting Swami Pramathanandaji as its first Monk-in-charge brought tremendous energy to the Society. Swami Pramathanandaji's tapasya, his purity, his organizing abilities, his vision and above all his all-encompassing love are the things that has developed the Vedanta Society into what it is today.

A single individual, however great, cannot run the Society. He can inspire, he can guide, he can be a pivot but the growth and progress of the Society depends on the common love of its members, friends and admirers.

Without your support, without your contribution of time, energy, money and above all your hearts love, the Society could not have flourished. Your love for God, your love for Vedanta - in and through Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda, your love for the Ideals of the Ramakrishna Mission, is the strength which binds us together. Any guest coming here, any monk visiting here, has nothing but praise and appreciation for this place. They are overwhelmed with the care you take of them, with the love you give to them. The Vedanta Society of Toronto holds a unique status of glory among the branch centres of the Ramakrishna Mission in the West. And it is on your account.

Why only the guests and visiting swamis, the resident monastic members also cannot fully express their gratitude to you for your enormous love, concern and care for them.

Swami Vivekananda says that the chief bond of unity among the members of an organization is the love for a common ideal. Our ideal is Sri Ramakrishna, our aim is to transform ourselves - from animal to man, from man to God - to be free and love all. We are all protected by Holy Mother and her life and teachings.

We are seekers of Truth. Seekers of truth make no distinction on the basis of race, gender, class, caste, religion, culture or nationality. Holy Mother reminds us - 'The whole world is your own. No one is a stranger.'

I would like to thank all the members, friends, admirers, and especially the members of the Board of Trustess and the members of the Executive Committee.

May Thakur, Ma and Swamiji vouchsafe the growth and strength of our Society and bless us all with the gems of spiritual progress.

Quantum Leap

Jesus Christ's Life

These In the village of Nazareth lived Mary and Joseph. One day Mary told Joseph about a dream she had. Her dream was that an angel had visited her and told her she was going to have a child who was the Son of God. One day the emperor told them to go back to the town they were born. Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem. When they reached Bethlehem it was night. No inn had room for them, so they went to a cave where shepherds were. They went there and Jesus was born. When Jesus was born a bright star appeared over Bethlehem. The 3 kings of the east followed that star and reached the cave. They gave Jesus gifts. That's why we celebrate Christmas, to honor Jesus Christ's birthday. Jesus was a man that loved everyone he knew, even strangers. For example once a man needed Jesus but could not find him, so his friends told him and Jesus came rushing to help him. Jesus said, 'You love each other just like I have been to you.' This was the solution to mankind's problem. They didn't have the love like Jesus had. Jesus said that 'You must love your God with your whole heart and soul'. That was the greatest commandment. The last one is 'You must also love your neighbor as yourself'. Jesus showed us all by words and deeds how to love God and Humans. Not only did Jesus teach us what to do, but he also practiced what he said.

Some people believed that Jesus was the Son of God, but during his time the religious authorities rejected him as the Son of God. So they decided to kill Jesus. They put him on a cross and nailed his body. This is where the cross sign comes from. Just before his last breath he said to God 'Father, please forgive them. They don't know what they are doing.' Jesus said the pain that he felt during crucifixion is negligible compared to the pain mankind suffers from the sins of the world.

By Utsha Saha, Age 8

Student of the Vedanta Vidya Mandir

Stories Told By Swami Vivekananda
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(From the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda)

That drill business in the temples and churches - kneeling down at a certain time, standing at ease, and all that drill nonsense, all mechanical, with the mind thinking of something else - all this has nothing to do with real religion. There was a great prophet in India, Guru Nānak, born [some five] hundred years ago.

One day he went to the Mohammedans' mosque. Guru Nanak went in and the Mohammedans were standing in prayer. They stand in lines: they kneel down, stand up, and repeat certain words at the same times, and one fellow leads. So Guru Nanak went there. And when the mullah was saying 'In the name of the most merciful and kind God, Teacher of all teachers', Guru Nanak began to smile. He says, 'Look at that hypocrite'. The mullah got into a passion. 'Why do you smile?'

'Because you are not praying, my friend. That is why I am smiling.'

'Not praying?'

'Certainly not. There is no prayer in you.'

The mullah was very angry, and he went and laid a complaint before a magistrate and said, 'This heathen rascal dares to come to our mosque and smiles at us when we are praying. The only punishment is instant death. Kill him.'

Guru Nanak was brought before the magistrate and asked why he smiled.

'Because he was not praying.'

'What was he doing?' the magistrate asked.

'I will tell you what he was doing if you will bring him before me.'

The magistrate ordered the mullah to be brought. And when he came, the magistrate said, 'Here is the mullah. [Now] explain why you laughed when he was praying.'

Guru Nanak said, 'Give the mullah a piece of the Koran [to swear on]. [In the mosque] when he was saying 'Allah, Allah', he was thinking of some chicken he had left at home.'

The poor mullah was confounded. He was a little more sincere than the others, and he confessed he was thinking of the chicken, and so they let the Sikh go. 'And', said the magistrate [to the mullah], 'don't go to the mosque again. It is better not to go at all than to commit blasphemy there and hypocrisy. Do not go when you do not feel like praying. Do not be like a hypocrite, and do not think of the chicken and say the name of the Most Merciful and Blissful God.'

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Yes, Yes!' he [Swami Vivekananda] reiterated. 'You Western folk want action! You cannot yet perceive the poetry of every common little incident in life! What beauty could be greater than that of the story of the young mother coming to Buddha with her dead boy? Or the incident of the goats? You see the Great Renunciation was not new in India! . . . But after Nirvana, look at the poetry!

'It is a wet night, and he comes to the cowherd's hut and gathers in to the wall under the dripping eaves. The rain is pouring down and the wind rising.

'Within, the cowherd catches a glimpse of a face through the window and thinks, 'Ha, ha! Yellow garb! Stay there! It's good enough for you!' And then he begins to sing.

'My cattle are housed, and the fire burns bright. My wife is safe, and my babes sleep sweet! Therefore ye may rain, if ye will, O clouds, tonight!'

'And the Buddha answers from without, "My mind is controlled: my senses are all gathered in; my heart firm. Therefore ye may rain, if ye will, O clouds, tonight!'

'Again the cowherd: 'The fields are reaped, and the hay is fast in the barn. The stream is full, and the roads are firm. Therefore ye may rain, if ye will, O clouds, tonight.'

'And so it goes on, till at last the cowherd rises, in contrition and wonder, and becomes a disciple.

'Or what would be more beautiful than the barber's story?

'The Blessed One passed by my house. My house - the Barber's! I ran, but He turned and awaited me. Awaited me - the Barber! I said, 'May I speak, O Lord, with Thee?' "And He said 'Yes!' 'Yes!' To me - the Barber! And I said, 'Is Nirvana for such as I?' And He said 'Yes!' Even for me - the Barber! And I said, 'May I follow after Thee?' 'And He said, 'Oh yes!' Even I - the Barber! And I said, 'May I stay, O Lord, near Thee?' And He said, 'Thou mayest!' Even to me - the poor Barber!

Past & Upcoming Events

The Centre celebrated **Kalpataru Day** on January 1st. Over 350 devotees attended the jubilant event. And on January 21st, **Swami Vivekananda's Birth Anniversary** was celebrated at the Centre. Both auspicious occasions were observed with worship, bhajans, reading, flower-offering and prasad. A special programme to worship Swami Vivekananda included homa (fire ceremony).

Swami Kripamayananda was in Montreal from January 13th to the 16th, as an invited guest of the **Vedanta Society of Montreal**. He conducted the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi Birth Anniversary Public Celebration. Over 300 devotees attended the event, and enjoyed the spiritual and cultural programmes.

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

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

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

Lectures are given every Sunday at 11 am by Swami Kripamayananda or distinguished speakers. The service includes devotional singing, reading, meditation and refreshments. **Please note, on February 26th, the Sunday lecture is cancelled due to Mahashivaratri Puja in the evening. Please use front entrance.**

Scripture Class

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.

Calendar of Events

Minister and Teacher

Swami Kripamayanda

Ramakrishna Order of India

February 2006

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

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We again request all annual members to kindly renew their memberships for the year 2006. Thank you very much.

Scripture Class:
Life of Swami Trigunatita
7:30 pm

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Lecture:
Emotions and Spirituality
11 am
Vedanta Vidya Mandir 1 pm

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10
Scripture Class:
Bhaja Govindam
7:30 pm

11
Soup Kitchen
9:30 am

12
Lecture*:
Meditation - The Art of Mental Healing
11 am
Ram Nam 5 pm

13

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16

17
Scripture Class:
Life of Swami Adbhutananda
7:30 pm

18
Vigil
6 am - 6 pm

19
Lecture:
When We See Evil
11 am
Vedanta Vidya Mandir 1 pm

20

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24
Scripture Class:
Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna
7:30 pm

25
Soup Kitchen
9:30 am

26
No Lecture

27

28

Public Celebration:
Maha Shivaratri
6 pm

Upcoming Public Celebrations

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

Rain water never stands on high grounds, but runs down to the lowest level. So also the mercy of God remains in the hearts of the lowly and humble, but drains off from those of the vain and the proud.

- Sri Ramakrishna

Feb. 12th
*Guest Speaker:
Dr. Indranill Basu Ray
Dept of Cardiology
Harvard Medical School,
Harvard University

Feb. 26th
Maha Shivaratri
A special programme of worship, bhajans, readings, flower-offering and prasad.

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