



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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Newsletter January 2010

Words to Inspire

No man's seeing God can help you the least bit except that it may excite you and urge you to do the same thing. That is the whole value of the ancients' examples. Nothing more. [Just] signposts on the way. No man's eating can satisfy another man. You have to see God yourself.

-Swami Vivekananda's Works, pp 469-

THE GITA III

(Delivered in San Francisco on May 29, 1900 - From "Swami Vivekananda's Works" pp 467-468)

Arjuna asks: "You just advised action, and yet you uphold knowledge of Brahman as the highest form of life. Krishna, if you think that knowledge is better than action, why do you tell me to act?"

[Sri Krishna]: "From ancient times these two systems have come down to us. The Sankya philosophers advance theory of knowledge. The Yogis advance the theory of work. But none can attain to peace by renouncing actions. None in this life can stop activity even for a moment. Nature's qualities [Gunas] will make him act. He who stops his activities and at the same time is still thinking about them attains nothing; he only becomes a hypocrite. But he, who by the power of his mind gradually brings his sense organs under control, employs them in work, that man is better. Therefore do thou work". "Even if you have known the secret that you have no duty, that you are free, still you have to work for the good of others. Because whatever a great man does, ordinary people will do also. If a great man who has attained peace of mind and freedom ceases to work, then all the rest without that knowledge and peace will try to imitate him, and thus confusion would arise.

"Behold, Arjuna, there is nothing that I do not possess and nothing that I want to acquire. And yet I continue to work. If I stopped work for a moment, the whole universe would [be destroyed]. That which the ignorant do with desire for results and gain, let the wise do without any attainment and without any desire for results and gain." Even if you have knowledge, do not disturb the childlike faith of ignorant. On the other hand, go down to their level and gradually bring them up. That is a very powerful idea, and it has become the ideal in India. That is why you can see a great philosopher going into a temple and worshipping images. It is not hypocrisy.

Later on we read that Krishna says, "Even those who worship other deities are really worshipping me". It is God incarnate whom man is worshipping. Would God be

angry if you called Him by the wrong name? He would be no God at all! Can't you understand that whatever a man has in his own heart is God - even if he worships a stone? What of that?

We will understand more clearly if we once get rid of the idea that religion consists of doctrines. One idea of religion is that the whole world was born because Adam ate apple, and there is no way of escape. Believe in Jesus Christ - in a certain man's death! But in India, there is quite a different idea. [There] religion means realization, nothing else. It does not matter whether one approaches the destination in a carriage with four horses, in an electric car, or rolling on ground. The goal is the same. For the [Christians] the problem is how to escape the wrath of the terrible God. For the Indians it is how to become what they really are, to regain their lost Selfhood.

Have you realized that you are spirit? When you say, "I do," do you imply - this lump of flesh called the body or the spirit, the infinite, ever blessed effulgent, and immortal? You may be the greatest philosopher, but as long as you have the idea that you are the body, you are no better than the little worm crawling under your foot! No excuse for you! So much the worse for you for you know all philosophies and at the same time think you are the body. Body-gods! that is what you are. Is that religion? Religion is the realization of spirit as spirit. What are we doing now? Just the opposite, realizing spirit as matter. Out of the immortal God we manufacture death and matter, and out of dead dull matter we manufacture spirit. If you [can realize Brahman] by standing on your head, or on by one foot, or by worshipping five thousand gods with three heads each - then march ahead! Do it any way you can! Nobody has any right to denounce any path. Krishna says, even if your means are better and higher, you have no right to criticize another man's means as worse or lower, however wicked you may think of the man.

2009 Annual General Meeting President's Address

Man does not live on bread alone. As healthy nourishing food is required for a healthy body so is spiritual food required for our soul. If we don't get our spiritual food, we can never be satisfied with the physical food or food for our sense objects. That spiritual food for the soul, to give that, God himself has to make plans and God wants to guide us to find where and how can we get that food. Sometimes it becomes so important that God himself comes to the earth as incarnations, prophets and spiritual teachers. Sri Ramakrishna is such a God-man, an incarnation whose sole purpose was to guide us and nourish our soul. It is his teachings that we disseminate through our organization, Vedanta Society of Toronto.

There are two types of growth for an organization – horizontal and vertical. Horizontal growth is measured by the number of members attending the Sunday service, scripture discourses, various Puja and spiritual events as well as the amount of funds flowing into the organization. Vertical growth is measured by the progress at the individual level. The growth of spiritual qualities in the members is a true indication of the growth of the organization. Such growth will be reflected in their behaviour such as love for all, attenuation of self, not find faults with others; in effect live the teachings of the Sri Ramakrishna. Such practice of the teachings will culminate in perfection of the individual and he will become a true devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. This is ideal that we all need to cherish and consistently work towards or we might lose the solitary purpose of this human life.

Vedanta Society members have certain aspirations from the Society. What are those aspirations? When we come to the Society we want to become more peaceful, more spiritual and treasure the holy company. We don't come here to listen to complaints, "You know that person said that thing, that person has so and so defect, that person looks so ugly". We don't come here to listen to that. We come here to listen to how Sri Ramakrishna loved, how Swami Bramhananda loved the devotees, how this person in this advanced age did something so nice. We come here to hear how a devotee comes early morning in the winter and even though parking is

available nearby, goes and parks the car in a far-away parking lot so that some other old devotee can park his car nearby. We come here to listen about these things in the Society. Not criticizing, not back-biting! We don't want to hear how many times a person has or has not washed his hands before coming to the altar. We want to see how much a devotee has love for Sri Ramakrishna. We don't worry about whether one sprinkles Ganga water or not; if one's heart is pure then he is pure. Another thing is concern for the Society. We have wonderful devotees who have concern and love for the Society.

There are people who will point out little dirt here and there. But if somebody has genuine love and concern for the Society, then they themselves will pick-up the dirt and say nothing about it. Devotees work whole day and before going to their homes come and clean the washrooms. Who can stop the growth when the members and devotees of the Society are so great? Society also expects something from the members and devotees. The Society seeks commitment and loyalty to the ideas of Sri Ramakrishna. Character, truthfulness, respect for others, harmony of all religions, treating others as the devotees of God. Everyone who enters the precincts of the Society has been called by Sri Ramakrishna. That idea should be there. Sri Ramakrishna used to call, 'Where are you, come'. That call is still there, that call comes to the soul and people come here. Once one person came first week and then came the second week. I asked, 'Did you like the activities of the Society, our Sunday service'. The person said, 'Swami I liked the happiness among the devotees'. Not lecture, not singing, not meditation. He was impressed how happy everyone was. Each of us represents Sri Ramakrishna. People who don't know Sri Ramakrishna meet us and when we say that I am devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, that I am member of Vedanta Society, they feel so attracted to Sri Ramakrishna. But if we call ourselves devotees, we have great responsibilities.

Our members and devotees are very dedicated workers. Monks and devotees who visit here from other places are so much impressed. They say, 'I have visited many centers in the west but I

have not seen any center, where the devotees take so much of loving care of the monks and other devotees'. Genuine feeling of love whether it is the monks or devotees, this is our strength. We feel that we belong to the Society the Society is ours.

Strength of organization depends on Unity of purpose. That is the one binding factor that gives us strength. If we love Sri Ramakrishna, we will always be together. Maybe we will see some small defects, but we start thinking that that person loves Sri Ramakrishna. Though I don't like him but he loves Sri Ramakrishna. Then you will say, 'Je Jana Sri Ramakrishna Bhaje, se hoy amar pran re'. Those who love Sri Ramakrishna are dear to me like my own life. If we love our ideals of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda, then we will be able to love everyone who loves them. Even if they don't love Sri Ramakrishna still we will love them, because our hearts will be filled with love. We must have love not only for Sri Ramakrishna, but for all religious teachers. Teachings of Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, Zarathustra, Guru Nanak, all these teachers who talk about God is very dear to us. That is the positive way to quench the thirst of our soul. We must draw inspirations from all spiritual disciplines, that is what Ramakrishna mission and ideal of Sri Ramakrishna stands for.

We need to work hard to reduce our ego and feeling of indispensability. We should not think that I am there that is why the work gets done and conversely what will happen if I am not there. Who will do the work that I did. We need to understand that it is Sri Ramakrishna who allows us to work for him. Swami Vivekananda used to say that if Sri Ramakrishna wanted then he could make thousands of Vivekananda's from the dust. We are given an opportunity to work. The more work we do for the Society, the more we must become humble. We must know that anyone can do the work that I am doing. This Society is not run by the Monk-in-charge, not by the devotees, not by the members, but by Sri Ramakrishna himself. He runs, he inspires us and he allows us to work for him. Then our ego will become smaller and smaller; erasing of the individual ego is

the goal! Only when we have erased the ego that we will truly represent Sri Ramakrishna, who was devoid of any ego and was the most humble person. If we have strong ego, I-ness and My-ness, then are we following Sri Ramakrishna? So remember that it is Mother, it is Sri Ramakrishna that is working through us! So whenever any guest comes to Society, he is to be treated as Sri Ramakrishna's guest, our guest and we should make him feel at home. That should be our duty. Because he has come to Sri Ramakrishna, he is an object of our honour and service.

Positive attitude amongst members is very important. Always see the positive things, and not the negative things. That makes us closer and friendly to each other. No one in the world is perfect. If you want to find defect then you can find defect with anyone. Somebody found defect with Sita also. The purest being that was born that was Sita and somebody found defect in her, so you know that you can find defect in anyone. That should not be our attitude, we are devotees and followers of Sri Ramakrishna; we will not see the defects. We will see the good points in others. We will try to make everyone our own. Sri Ramakrishna also wanted his devotees to be friendly. We are not born perfect but we want to be perfect, we want to be free from all defects, we want to be liberated. We, the members and devotees of Vedanta Society, are in the process of improving ourselves, making ourselves better. By cooperation, love, sympathy, friendliness and by the grace of Sri Ramakrishna amongst ourselves, we will achieve that perfection. In this life most probably and, certainly, there is no doubt, in the next lives we will attain that liberation from all bondage and defects.

So I congratulate you for your association with this great organization, Ramakrishna Mission through the Vedanta Society, to make your lives spiritual, which will be a blessing to yourself and to everyone around you. So I greet you all for your ideal and pray to Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swamiji, Buddha and Christ whom we adore and worship in this Society, to bless us and make us pure and make more loving for God and for each other. Thank you very much.

My ideal, indeed, can be put into a few words, and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity and how to make it manifest in every movement of life.

-Swami Vivekananda-

BELUR MATH NEWS

Information Integrity Coalition, an International Body located in the USA, selected **Lucknow** Sevashrama as one of the Six Finalists out of 125 nominees from 27 countries for the *Excellence in Information Integrity Award* in the Non-Profit Category for the year 2009. Swami Muktinathananda, Secretary of the Sevashrama, received the Award at a function held at Northern Illinois University, Naperville, USA, on 17 November.

Kamarpukur centre held a one-day *Vivekananda Bhavanuragi Shikshak Sammelan* (Teachers' Convention) on 22 November, in which 402 teachers, who are admirers of Swami Vivekananda, participated.

Lucknow Sevashrama organized a national CME on *Pediatric Neurology* at its Vivekananda Polyclinic & Institute of Medical Sciences on 21 and 22 November for mass awareness in the field of Child Health Care. Many distinguished guest speakers from far and near participated in the well-attended Seminar.

Students of **Narendrapur** college secured the following ranks (within the first ten) at the Joint Admission Test for MSc courses (JAM) in the various Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) held this year: **Chemistry**: 1,2,9 & 10; **Statistics**: 1,3 & 10.

Swami Atmasthanandaji, President, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, consecrated the newly built Sri Ramakrishna Temple, with a marble image of Sri Ramakrishna, at **Ponnampet** Ashrama on 27 October, the sacred Jagaddhatri Puja day. Swami Smarananandaji, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, released the commemorative volume. Swami Atmasthanandaji, Swami Smarananandaji, and several other distinguished persons addressed the public meetings. A youth convention, cultural programmes including devotional singing, and *arayana seva* (poor-feeding) formed part of the three-day programme organized from 26 to 28 October. Thousands of devotees, about 150 Swamis and Brahmacharis of our Order and nearly 30 monks from other organizations attended the celebration.

Hyderabad Math conducted state-wide quiz and elocution contests on the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda in collaboration with our branch centres and unaffiliated centres in Andhra Pradesh from July to October. About 800 students in the age group 18-25 participated in the multi-round contests.

On 2 October, **Viveknagar** (Tripura) centre organized a workshop on health awareness, and a blood donation camp in which 66 persons donated blood.

Winter Relief: The following centres distributed blankets and various winter garments, shown in brackets, to the needy in their respective areas: **Chapra** (2000 blankets, 875 sweaters, 700 caps and scarves), **Malda** (900 blankets), **Narainpur** (900 sweaters and 900 woolen ear-bands), **Puri Math** (100 blankets), **Purulia** (1500 blankets).

Distress Relief: The following centres distributed various items, shown in brackets, to the needy in their respective areas: **Chandigarh** [150 kg rice, 150 kg flour, 150 kg *dal* (lentils), 15 kg oil, 30 kg sugar and 30 kg salt], **Chapra** (1200 kg sugar), **Cooch Behar** (239 *saris*, 41 *dhotis* and 8 *lungis*), **Guwahati** (250 *saris*, 23 children's garments and 65 steel plates), **Jalpaiguri** (400 *saris*), **Malda** (500 *saris*, 200 *dhotis* and 2 van rickshaws), **Puri Math** (26 packets of baby food, 51 soap-bars, 39 toothbrushes and 39 tubes of toothpaste), **Purulia** (40 plastic sheets for spreading on the roofs of the huts and 116 sets of textbooks to poor students).

Aila Cyclone Relief: Rahara and Sikra Kulingram centres continued relief operations among the victims of Aila Cyclone in West Bengal. Details of the relief materials distributed are given below.

(a) **Rahara centre** – 63 kg biscuits, 51 kg coconut oil and 1000 blankets to 1000 families of 3 villages in Sandeshkhali-II block, North 24-Parganas district, during this month.

(b) **Sikra Kulingram centre** – 1350 *saris*, 411 *lungis*, 33 *dhotis*, 98 shirts, 127 towels, 278 frocks, 215 assorted garments, 1500 blankets and 46 mosquito-nets to 1500 families of 59 villages in Sandeshkhali-I & II blocks, North 24-Parganas district, during September-November.

Flood Relief: Our centres in Karnataka and West Bengal continued relief operations among the flood victims. Details of the relief materials distributed during this month are given below.

(a) **Karnataka: Belgaum & Mysore centres** – 8650 kg flour, 865 blankets, 1730 cooking vessels, 1730 ladles, 865 plates and 1730 bowls to 865 families of 2 villages in Gadag district.

(b) **West Bengal: Kamarpukur centre** – 100 *saris*, 50 *dhotis*, 65 shirts, 410 children's garments and 200 blankets to 775 families of Khanakul-II block in Hooghly district.

SUMMARY OF PAST EVENTS

Sri Sarada Devi Birth Anniversary was celebrated on **Sunday 13th Dec 2009 at 11:00 am**. The programme consisted bhajans, puja, homa, flower offering followed by prasad distribution. More than **170** devotees attended.

The **Christmas Eve** was celebrated on Thursday **24th Dec 2009 at 6:00 pm**. The programme included carol singing, lighting of candles followed by prasad distribution.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sri Ramakrishna Birth Anniversary Celebrations will be held on Sunday 21st Feb 2010 at 11.00 am.

The programme will consist of bhajans, puja, homa, flower offering followed by 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, January 16, 2010**, 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 January 17, 2010 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 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.

Announcement: Newsletter Mailing

As announced in the AGM 2009, henceforth all the members and friends who have provided their email-id to the Society will receive the Newsletter by email. The Newsletter will also be available at our website: vedantatoronto.ca.

Members and friends requiring Newsletter by post would need to place a request with the Society.

Vedanta Society of Toronto

Minister and Teacher - Swami Kripamayananda, Ramakrishna Order of India

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					<u>1</u> 6:00 pm Kalpataru Utsav	<u>2</u>
<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u> Last Day of Winter Recess
<u>10</u> 11:00 am Swami Vivekananda Birth Anniversary Celebration	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: 'Vivekachudamani'	<u>16</u> Vigil: 6 am to 6 pm
<u>17</u> Lecture: 11am 'Worship of the Living God' <u>VVM 1:30 pm</u> 5:00PM Ram Nam	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>20</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>22</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'	<u>23</u>
<u>24</u> 11:00 am: <u>Guest</u> <u>Lecture:</u> 'Vision of the Gita for Human Development' by Dr. Narendra Bakhshi	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: 'Vivekachudamani'	<u>30</u>
<u>31</u> Lecture: 11 am 'Spiritual Maturity' <u>VVM 1:30 pm</u>						

Spiritual Retreat with Swami Sridharanandaji at Canmore, Alberta (Rockies) on Sept 4 & 5 2010.
Registration fee \$200 per person. Seats limited. Please contact the Society soon.

- Discourses delivered by Swami Sridharananda at the Vedanta Society of Toronto are available for sale :*
1. *Retreat on the Bhagavad Gita held in Sept. 2009- CD & DVD set - \$40. Shipping and handling extra.*
 2. *Reminiscences of Swami Virajananda- DVD set - \$ 15.00. Shipping and handling extra.*

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Membership / Renewal /Newsletter Form - 2010

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Prov./State: _____ Postal/Zip Code: _____

Phone (home): _____ (cell): _____

Email: _____

Signature: _____

Membership Options:

Annual Membership is \$50 per person. Life Membership is \$500 per person

I want to renew my Annual Membership for Jan.-Dec. 2010. Please find enclosed a cheque made payable to the Vedanta Society of Toronto.

I want to become a new Annual Member for Jan.-Dec. 2010. Please find enclosed a cheque made payable to the Vedanta Society of Toronto.

I want to become a Life Member. Please find enclosed a cheque made payable to the Vedanta Society of Toronto.

Newsletter Options:

I am a regular visitor to the Centre and I will pick up the Newsletter.

I want to help the Society save on mailing expenses and I would like to receive the Newsletter by email.(I have provided my email address above.)

I would prefer to continue to receive the Newsletter sent by post.

Date: _____

Lecture: _____