



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

Website: www.vedantatoronto.ca

Newsletter January 2011

Words to Inspire

God, the only One, exists hidden in all beings. He is all pervading and is the inner self of all creatures. He is the Lord (presiding over) of all actions and the abode of all beings. He is the witness and pure consciousness free from the three gunas of Nature.

-The Vedanta Kesari, Vol. 97, No. 7, July 2010,
Vedic Prayers, Tr. by Swami Sambuddhananda-

REMOVING THE COVERING

(The Vedanta Kesari ~ 247 – July 2010)

How does one remove this covering? In the first place, the covering is not a permanent thing. It is described in a contrasting language – ‘It is there and yet it is not there.’ In other words, it is a kind of illusion, real now but unreal ultimately.

Let us try to understand the process by extending the smile with which we began. If Ultimate Truth or God has hidden Himself behind the veil, we can remove the veil in four ways:

❖ The first way is the way of analysis and contemplation. One learns to refine and use the faculty of discrimination and analyze the veil called avidya. This requires a keen intellect, freedom from all attachments and a tremendous will power. One realizes, especially, by freeing oneself from all impurities in the form of attachments and aversions. This enables one to understand the falsity of the veil. After all, ego or avidya, is only a misconception and a misconception can be removed by correcting our understanding and that is what self-analysis does. This is the path of Jnana or Knowledge through analysis and investigation into the nature of Reality.

❖ Another way is to calm the mind and free it from all distractions. A calm and focused mind, in its meditative state, sees the Truth beneath the ocean of existence. So, one begins by withdrawing the mind and concentrating it within, seeking the Reality. Once the mind is completely stilled, the Reality stands

revealed. This is the path of meditation-Raja Yoga. It is uncovering the veil by concentrating on the Reality behind the veil.

❖ The third way is to understand that the veil is opaque from our side. From the other side, one can see through it. Hence, the Reality called God behind the veil is constantly seeing and watching us. Feeling His Presence, one then does all actions merely for love of Him. Freed from all greed and attachment, one then performs all works as worship. This is the path of going righteous action in right spirit-Karma Yoga. The aim of Karma Yoga is to purify the mind by examining one’s motives, and freeing oneself from all attachments and selfishness.

❖ The fourth, and the final, way is to simply cry out one’s heart to the One who is hiding behind the veil and ask Him to reveal Himself. It is the path of Bhakti or pure devotion. It is born of the realization of the fact that all efforts to remove the veil are meaningless and futile unless He decides to reveal Himself. It is the path of surrendering and praying to Him to remove the veil.

All the four paths are relevant and effective in removing the veil. According to Swamiji synchronizing all the four for removing the veil covering the Reality is the best. Though all are valid, one can use one or combine all the four and try to remove the veil.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Swami Kripamayanda

(Based on a talk given at the Annual General Meeting on November 14, 2010)

That was a great day when three intellectuals came together and envisaged the creation of an organization under the name of Vedanta Society of Toronto. Supported by devotees and blessed by Swami Ranganathanandaji and Swami Bhasyanandaji, the Vedanta Society of Toronto came into effect in 1968. Another great day was when the Society was approved for affiliation with the Ramakrishna Mission. The third great day was when by the grace of Sri Ramakrishna, with the approval of the Trustees of the Ramakrishna Mission, and the help and support of members of the Society, Swami Pramathanandaji was sent here in 1989 as a permanent residential monk, to guide and shape the activities of the Centre. All that we see in the Vedanta Society is his planning, dream, his thinking which has taken effect and is growing further.

The members, visitors and devotees continued growing in number, and this led to the requirement of a bigger house. This house was bought in 1995, and at the time, it was thought that this was a very big house. Now after 15 years we find that even this is small, and we require a larger space. It is the love and dedication of the devotees that has led to the expansion of the Society. Because we always live with the ideals of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda, we felt the need for a physical link with the Ramakrishna mission. People knew that the Ramakrishna mission is a very unique organization. There are other organizations also which follow the ideals of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda, but the Ramakrishna mission was the first one, formed by none other than the great Swami Vivekananda.

When Swamiji first founded the Order on May 1, 1897, he made it clear that this organization will uphold the ideas of Sri Ramakrishna, following whom we will try to achieve the highest truths that are expressed in Vedanta. Swamiji said that Vedanta cannot be understood without understanding the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. In the Ramakrishna Order, we try to achieve this highest spiritual goal through all the

four yogas, and that is one of the uniqueness of the Ramakrishna Order. We give equal importance to devotion, prayer and worship, and also to study, meditation and to service of fellow human beings, as worship of God. These four yogas are practiced harmoniously.

Another important thing about the Ramakrishna mission is that we respect all religions as veritable ways to reach the highest spiritual illumination. Swamiji had said that we don't believe in tolerance, but we believe in the actual *acceptance* of other's faiths, other's ideas and thoughts. Another idea of the Ramakrishna mission as guided by Swamiji, is that, this is a totally apolitical institution. Yet another uniqueness of the Ramakrishna Order is that, although it is headed by the monks, both monks and householders run the Order standing shoulder to shoulder. This is based on firm faith in the words of Sri Ramakrishna, that monks and householders are two different ways of living the life, and both are equally capable of realizing the highest truth.

To realize God, it is very important to have 'commitment to purpose' and 'focus on the ideal'. For this, it is necessary to practice a little of austerity and turning our eyes from the worldly desires towards God. Austerities have two aspects. One aspect is to try and avoid a very indulgent life, and to try and live on the minimum necessities to survive. This is the external part of austerity. The other aspect, which is not so visible, is to try and keep our minds focused on God and focus on the spirit.

The external practice of austerity is relatively easy. For example, suppose you are given a cake. It is easy to say that I don't like the cake and put it away. But the practice of the internal austerity requires more effort. This requires us to maintain our balance and not be disturbed by relatively unimportant things. For example, if someone insults me, I should remain unaffected by it, and be able to keep my balance. I should stay focused on the purpose or ideal, as Sri Ramakrishna has said. The

main idea is to grow in love for God and therefore in love for all living beings. We must follow our chosen ideal, whether it be Sri Ramakrishna or Christ or Buddha or another ideal.

Sincerity of purpose is another thing which is needed to focus our mind from the external world to the spiritual world. To achieve this we must practice spiritual disciplines and for this practice, we must be prepared to sacrifice a little of our easy going life and turn our attention more towards God. Over the last 42 years, the Vedanta Society of Toronto has gained a very good reputation in the Ramakrishna family, as we find from the messages from the various monks that were read out today. Whenever the monks from other Centres visit here, they are extremely well taken care of by the devotees and this has resulted in them praising the Society. This is all due to the love of the devotees. This love for the monks, is rooted in your love for the spiritual ideals represented by Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swamiji.

I would like to read a poem by one of the devotees, which indicates the love for Vedanta Society –

At First Sight

*How sweet was the morning!
Clear blue skies
Playful glistening of the sun
Mounds of snow from days before
The whole city seemed to be covered in a shimmering blanket.
The sun's light was reflected by the ice
As if silver powder was scattered around.
My mind was filled with happiness without any apparent reason.
With my tea cup, standing by the window, I enjoyed the beautiful white outfit
the nature was wearing, as though, dressed for a special event.
Like candles hanging, the icicles were dangling from the tree branches.
With the sun shining on them, some of the icicles were reflecting colours of the rainbow.*

*All of a sudden that morning, a friend's call came.
There was an important celebration happening that day, that she wanted me to attend.
In my happy state, to whet my curiosity, I went along.*

*We parked the car at the event.
I didn't know anything - where I came, what celebration was occurring.*

"Love at first sight"

*I never accepted that could happen, before.
I always carefully consider, argue, judge for myself – that is my nature.
Having left the car, that my friend had already started walking.
In front of my eyes, I saw, what seemed to be a snow covered shiny white image as
Though from the high mountains of the Himalayas, with Mahadev himself in deep meditation,
His hair seemingly adorning its roof.
An inexplicable image of beauty and Divine strength intertwined.
What a beautiful scene, what a glorious image.*

*I felt like I myself was but a small particle of iron, with Mahadev as a strong magnet.
It felt as though a current of electricity had passed through my body.
This was the first time I saw your glorious and peaceful image
I loved you instantly.
A concrete example of "love at first sight".*

*Everything I knew in my life had been turned upside down.
Slowly my entire body, mind, life, my everything was spiraling into a small point that became one with that magnet.
A wave of love suddenly filled my heart - I felt compelled to come closer.
You were beckoning me, asking me to come to you.
My previously empty heart was now experiencing joyful spiritual love.
"My heart had touched your feet".
I arrived to a new world, received new inspiration.
I saw a new light. My body and mind filled with devotion, love and respect.
I was reborn, I realized that life was beautiful, blissful.
I understood then that, this was not an Himalayan mountain, but rather Satchidananda.*

With the sudden call from my friend, it was as though the small point that had become one with the magnet had slowly become a part of my body.

Intoxicated with love a faith, I slowly approached closer.

I gave my heart, love, respect, devotion to you on that special moment, on that special day.

I learned that was Sri Sri Ramakrishna's birthday.

That was the occasion for this celebration.

I didn't realize when I had returned home after that celebration.

I was still intoxicated with love and faith.

My mind was recurrently drawn to thoughts of you.

From that time, I started to go to see you regularly.

My friend was not able to attend regularly because of work and family responsibilities.

Perhaps Thakur sent her to guide me to you.

Storms, rain, snow, nothing could keep me from you.

My first thoughts, when I wake up are of you.

I can't still my mind.

Even throughout my day's work, I see you in my mind all of the time.

Even in my sleep and dreams at night, I think of you.

No mater wherever I go, it seems as though you are always beside me.

Truly I feel, we are meant for each other.

You were hiding inside my heart, and now I have found you.

"Oh, grant my prayer that I may never lose the bliss of the touch of the one in the play of the many".

I tell everyone about you with so much pride.

You are kind, constant like an evergreen, a steadfast sign.

You are mankind's cleansing ocean. You are Canada's holy refuge.

Your interior is adorned with precious jewels of love, knowledge, kindness and bliss.

I am grateful to be bathing in your pure waters.

You are my Shantiniketan, you are my joyful, peaceful home.

You are what I was longing for.

You are my deity, my devotion, my joy.

You are "Toronto Vedanta Ashram".

For millions years to come, please bestow your endless love, bliss and knowledge to the hungry hearts.

Let them hear your sweet nectar-like gospel.

I worship you with all of my heart. "I ask for a moment's indulgence to sit by thy side".

"When desire blinds the mind with delusion and dust, O thou holy one, thou wakeful, come with thy light and thy thunder".

At the end, let me just say,

"Give me thy strength to surrender my strength to thy will with love".

This love for the Vedanta Society is felt by all of us, but maybe all could not express it. This love of the devotees is all due to the blessings of Swami Ranganathanandaji and Swami Bhasyanandaji and the guidance of Swami Pramathanandaji. We have the blessings of Buddha, Jesus, Sri Ramakrishna, Swamiji and finally our Holy Mother who is taking care of us at all steps. With their blessings, may we all continue to grow in our spiritual life! May we all continue to enjoy and benefit from the holy atmosphere in this Vedanta Society. And may we all serve the Society so that it is a source of spiritual inspiration for all people!

They alone live who live for others, the rest are more dead than alive.

This is the gist of all worship – to be pure and to do good to others.

It is love and love alone that I preach, and I base my teaching on the great Vedantic truth of the sameness and omnipresence of the Soul of the Universe.

-Teachings of Swami Vivekananda-

SUMMARY OF PAST EVENTS

The **Christmas Eve** was celebrated on Thursday **24th Dec 2010 at 6:00 pm**. The programme included carol singing, lighting of candles followed by prasad distribution.

Sri Sarada Devi Birth Anniversary was celebrated on **Monday 27th Dec 2010 at 11:00 am**. The programme consisted of bhajans, puja, homa, flower offering followed by prasad distribution.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sri Ramakrishna Birth Anniversary Tithi Puja Celebrations will be held on Sunday 06 March 2011 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 15, 2011**, 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 16, 2011 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 office **9 days in a month** serving 450 meals at **Syme Woolner Neighbourhood & Family Centre, 2468 Eglinton Ave W, Unit 3, Toronto, ON, M6M 5E2**. 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.

Copies of the Vedanta Society's 2009-2010 Annual Report, Financial Report, and the 2009 AGM Minutes (distributed to attendees at the Vedanta Society's 2010 Annual General Meeting on November 14) are available to any member of the Society. Interested members are requested to contact the Vedanta Society.

Vedanta Society of Toronto

Minister and Teacher - Swami Kripamayanda, Ramakrishna Order of India

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						<u>1</u> 5:00 pm Kalpataru Utsav
<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen
<u>9</u> 11am Lecture: <i>'Narendra's Sri Ramakrishna'</i> VVM 1:30 pm	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: <i>'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'</i>	<u>15</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen Vigil: 6 am to 6 pm
<u>16</u> 11am Lecture: <i>'Swami Vivekananda and His Brother Disciples'</i> VVM 1:30 pm 5:00pm -Ram Nam	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>19</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>21</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: <i>Vivekachudaman i'</i>	<u>22</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen
<u>23</u> 11am Lecture: <i>'Importance of an Ideal Personality'</i> by Prof. N.N. Bakshi VVM 1:30 pm	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: <i>'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'</i>	<u>29</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen
<u>30</u> 11am: Swami Vivekananda Birth Anniversary Public Celebrations	<u>31</u>					

The Vedanta Society will be closed for Winter Recess from December 25, 2010 to January 8, 2011. During this period there will be no Sunday Lecture and Friday Scripture class. However, the morning meditation from 6 to 7am & evening prayer and meditation from 6 to 8 pm, will be held every day as usual.