



Vedanta Society of Toronto

(Ramakrishna Mission)

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Newsletter – October 2007

As the lamp does not burn without oil, so man cannot live without God ~ Sri Ramakrishna
(From *'The Life & Sayings of Ramakrishna'*)

Words to Inspire

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S UNIVERSAL VISION

(From *The Vedanta Kesari*, Dec. 2004)

In the history of religions, the life of Sri Ramakrishna is unique. He had no education in Science; yet one can find the essential scientific spirit revealed in his life and teachings. Unlike any of his contemporaries of the orthodox school, he did not study the scriptures; yet the conclusions of the scriptures came to be verified by his own experiences and revelations. His practice of different of different religions was never motivated by a predetermined plan, and his universal vision was not a consequence of extensive travel in far-off lands. Had he studied science, future generations would perhaps have doubted his pure devotion to universal Truth. Had he read the scriptures, they would have taken his revelations and his devotion for the Divine Mother as mere imitation. Whenever his experiences were put to objective testing, they invariably proved to be true. Whenever his revelations were compared to the testimony of the scriptures, people were astonished to find they were orthodox to the core. Doubts, therefore, only burnished his image; disbelief was resolved into the vitality of his message; and the objective verification of his experiences confirmed the stainless purity of his character and genuine love of God.

Sri Ramakrishna's earthly ministry was extremely brief. He did not take up a personal mission to preach and propagate his message. He remained completely hidden from the public eye. By his silent and profound life, Sri Ramakrishna combined within him not only all spiritual thoughts of the past but also the spiritual aspirations of the future. During his time, the degeneration was great, the doubts were deep, and therefore the realizations were required to be extraordinary. There had been enough speculation. The world needed a living example, a decisive demonstration of the spiritual truth everyday life. No reform movement – social, political, or economic – could salvage the soul. The answer to all agnostic vagueness is the direct realization of God, not the mere assurances of scripture and reason. In Sri Ramakrishna there was only God. He constantly remained intoxicated in that divine vision. His mind would continually dive deep in the ocean of divine consciousness to dredge more deeply the realm of bliss, and only at long intervals, out of compassion, would it return to this world of 'mine' and 'thine' in order to teach others. s person of such God – intoxication rarely preaches or takes up an active mission on earth. For an earthly mission, one must take a step from the state of constant God – consciousness. But the silent thoughts of great souls permeate the atmosphere. Sri Ramakrishna's powerful thoughts, stainless purity, burning renunciation, and infinite heart filled the atmosphere around him with a spiritual power that transformed and uplifted all who came under its influence.

Practical Religion

(Based on a talk delivered by Rev. Swami Kripamayanda at the YMCA St. Laurent, Montréal on Sunday, January 7th, 2007)

Religion is meant to give joy and a feeling of freedom. We're so bound by our duties and responsibilities that there's no time to practice religion. Often we think that religion is to be practiced mainly during leisure time. We forget that religion is an indispensable component for a happy and peaceful life. Though our life is full with our daily routine and daily schedule, there're spaces where religion can percolate. Religion will not overspill over our daily life, it will not disturb our routine, but it will make our life sweeter, kinder, more lovable, free from stress and more peaceful.

So what is religion? Going to holy places on a particular day is only a part of religion. Its not the whole religion. Religion aims at transforming our inner life. It aims at changing our attitudes towards the world. It makes us feel one with the world. Lord Jesus said, "Love your own brothers and sisters as I love you. Serve one another as I serve you."

Religion aims at making us free. All human life is meant to be free from ignorance, free from imitation, and free from imperfection. How can we free when we consider ourselves as a separate part of the universe? Religion tells that we are not separate from the universe; we are part of the universe. The illusion of ignorance separates us from others. Our real nature is the glorious shining immaterial Self which is called Atman in Sanskrit and Spirit in English. It's not made of matter. The ignorance of our spiritual nature separates us from all others and gives us the feeling that I am limited being and the rest is different from me. This brings misery, hatred, jealousy and separation.

Why do we love? Why did we feel so bad when we heard about the Tsunami? Why did we feel so sorry when we heard the news that two brothers and sisters in Montreal died when crushed by a snow remover? Those who died are not related to us, but why do we feel so sorry and anguished? Why do we feel sorry when nothing has happened to us? Its because of our Oneness. We're all one in the Spirit. Therefore, we cannot accept to see anyone suffer or meet with

injustice. This is the feeling of Oneness. The whole creation is one and religion will try to take us to that realization.

There are different ways we can help others. There're physical, psychological, intellectual and spiritual help. Physical help is the help that we give when someone who is in distress. For example, taking someone to the hospital or giving financial help to someone who is in need of it is an example of physical help. The action of helping others brings us closer to other human beings. Bring closer to each other is the manifestation of godliness and the practice of religion. What is psychological help? It is the help given to someone who is depressed. Words of encouragement, given with sincerity, are very powerful. These words can make a man stand up. So, we should try to give appreciative words to others and that's worship. That's practical religion.

Intellectual help is an expression of love. Give something to others.... give some skills to others so that they can stand on their own feet. That'll be a great help. Once, a boy went to drop a letter. The letter box was a little high, and the boy could not drop the letter. He asked help from someone. There were two ways he could have been given help. One way of helping could have been someone taking the letter and putting it in the letter box. The other way was to ask the boy to bring a brick lying on the roadside, put it down, and get onto it and post the letter by himself. The second help is intellectual help. Next time, the boy will be able to drop the letter by himself as he has been taught some skills. Give skills, give nice things to people which they can adopt and grow. So, helping others to grow is intellectual help.

The forth and highest help is spiritual help. What is spiritual help? Spiritual help is to help others to become aware of their higher nature, their spiritual nature. To make them aware of their spiritual nature, you've to tell them, "You're in fact the Spirit. You're not this limited body." Often, we are proud and arrogant of our leanings, lineage and

wealth. This pride has to be removed. In this short life, whatever we've achieved has been possible by the grace of God. If God had not been gracious, we would not have achieved anything. We're born as helpless children, and with the help of our parents and the grace of God, we've grown and we are what we are. Our eating, drinking and wearing clothes would not have possible without the help of others. Thus, God helps us through others.

One of our Swamis wrote a beautiful allegory. Our heart is like a garden in which there are various kinds of seeds. There are good and bad seeds. There're constructive seeds and destructive seeds. When good seeds sprout, we have a beautiful garden. When bad seeds sprout, we have a garden of weeds and a jungle. In our heart there is compassion and love, and at the same time, there is cruelty and hatred. All the seeds are there. Now it's up to us to decide which type of seeds we want to nurture, plant and water. When we water the seeds of love, love grows. When we water the seeds of hatred, we have hatred towards others. Sometimes we are not alert. Some of our neighbors

come to the garden of our heart and water the seeds of hatred. Without our knowledge, our seeds of hatred grow. We accept the seeds of hatred to grow instead of allowing the seeds of love to grow. At such a time, we need to tell the neighbors, who have come to water the seeds of hatred in our heart," I won't allow that. I won't allow you to grow the seeds of hatred in the garden of my heart." Thus, we should not allow others to water the seeds of hatred and jealousy in our heart. Growing a beautiful garden of love in our heart is practical religion.

God is full of love. The more love we grow in our heart, our interrelationship becomes sweeter, we grow in compassion and kindness, and we become friendlier to others. That's the beauty of religion. So we need to practice this in every moment of our work and daily life.



Swami Vivekananda on Practice of Religion

(From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 4)

The highest dream of many religions is the world. ... The vast majority of people are dreaming of the time when there will be no more disease, sickness, poverty, or misery of any kind. They will have a good time all around. Practical religion, therefore, simply means. "Clean the streets! Make it nice!" We see how all enjoy it.

Is enjoyment the goal of life? Were it so, it would be a tremendous mistake to become a man at all. What man can enjoy a meal with more gusto than the dog or the cat? Go to a menagerie and see the [wild animals] tearing the flesh from the bone. Go back and become a bird! . . . What a mistake then to become a man! Vain have been my years — hundreds of years — of struggle only to become the man of sense-enjoyments.

What is practical religion, then? To get to that state — freedom, the attainment of freedom. And this world, if it helps us on to that goal, [is] all right; if not — if it begins to bind one more layer on the thousands already there, it becomes an evil. Possessions, learning, beauty, everything else — as long as they help us to that goal, they are of practical value. When they have ceased helping us on to that goal of freedom, they are a positive danger. What is practical religion, then? Utilize the things of this world and the next just for one goal — the attainment of freedom. Every enjoyment, every ounce of pleasure is to be bought by the expenditure of the infinite heart and mind combined.

Navaratri, an Indian Festival:

Come October and there's just one feeling all over. A feeling of joy & happiness. A time for dance, music and devotion. Yes, we are talking about the most awaited festival by people from all walks of life -**Navratri**. A festival when the young-hearts throb with excitement and energy and the older generation is full of devotion.

What is 'Navaratri' all about?

Navratri is a festival of worship, dance and music celebrated over a period of nine nights (**Nav**-nine and **Ratri**-nights). It is celebrated from the first to ninth date of Ashwin Shukla Paksha of the Hindu Calendar for the worship of the Goddess Durga. Goddess Durga is believed to exist in many forms like Goddess Bhavani, Jagdamba, Mahakali etc. The first nine days of the Ashwin are devoted for worshipping the Divine Mother - '**MAA**'. These nine days are divided and devoted to the Trinity of God worshipped in a female form - three days for **Durga (Goddess of valor)** three days for **Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth)** and three days for **Sarswati (Goddess of Knowledge and Art)**. On the fifth day (Lalita Panchami), it is traditional, to gather all books, light a lamp and invoke Sarswati . The eighth and ninth day, it is traditional to perform **Yagna (sacrifice offered to the fire)** to honor **Divine Mother** and bid her farewell.

Gujaratis perform their traditional dances **Garba & Dandiya-Raas** during **Navratri**. The women-folk dance in a circle, singing 'Garbas' or traditional songs. Dandiya-Raas is played with wooden sticks (dandiyas). Apart from Gujrat, Garbas are performed in other states & cities like Mumbai. Beautifully decorated 'mandaps' are set up for playing garba & dandiya by various cultural societies, housing committees & youth social groups. Young men-women wear colourful traditional dresses and play Garba with great enthusiasm. The mood of Navratri is very colourful & unique. In various parts of India, the **Ram-Leela** is performed during Navratri. Ram-Leela is a stage enactment of Ramayana, the story of Lord Rama.

The tenth day, also known as **Vijaya Dasami (day of Victory over evils)**, Dassera is significant to launch new activities or beginning of learning. It signifies the good winning over the evil. It is believed that on this day, **Lord Rama** had killed the demon **Ravana**. So, on Dassera, effigies of Ravana are burnt all over India.

Navaratri is a festival of pure happiness and one of the most auspicious occasions.

<http://www.dandiyazone.com/navaratri.html>



Special events

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| October 07 from 12 noon to 12:45 pm- | Devotional songs by Gauri Guha and Luna Guha |
| October 19 from 4:00 pm to 4:20 pm- | Meditation on Mother Durga |
| October 19 from 4:21 pm to 5:09 pm- | Chanting of Mother Durga's Name |
| October 19 at 6:00 pm- | Durga Puja (Mahashtami) Celebration |
| October 21 at 6:00 pm- | Vijaya Dashami Celebration |

BELUR MATH NEWS

Medical Bulletin on Revered President Maharaj –

Owing to a sudden setback in the health of Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, he was admitted to Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan, Kolkata, on 4 September 2007. He is being treated by a team of specialists. His condition is at present a matter of concern.

On 25 August, Swami Atmasthanandaji, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, unveiled a fibreglass statue of Holy Mother installed by **Baghbazar** Math at the nearby *Mayer Ghat* in place of the old relief of Holy Mother which had been installed by the Ashrama earlier. He also presided over the meeting held on this occasion, in which Justice Sri Shyamal Sen, former Chairman of

Human Rights Commission, West Bengal, and some other dignitaries spoke.

FLOOD RELIEF WORK 2007 - 2008

In the wake of the recent devastating floods in **Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Orissa** and **West Bengal** the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission thorough their different centres conducted relief work, the details of which can be obtained from the following link –

http://www.belurmath.org/relief_news_archives/relief_latest_news.htm

The Department of Scientific & Industrial Research, Ministry of Science & Technology, Government of India, has recognized our Narendrapur college as a Scientific & Industrial Research Organization.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sitar Recital by **Adam Duncan** of Ottawa- Sunday, November 4 at 12 noon

Kali Puja- Friday, November 9 at 6:00 pm

AGM- Sunday, November 18 at 11 am

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, Oct 13 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: On Sunday, Oct 14 at 5:00 pm

INTERVIEWS/INSTRUCTION: Swami Kripamayanda 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 Oct 11, 18 and 23. 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

OCTOBER 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u> 7:30pm Scripture Class: Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna	<u>6</u>
<u>7</u> 11 am Lecture: ‘The Story of Mother Durga 12 Noon: Devotional Songs by Gauri Guha	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u> 9:30 am Soup Kitchen Swami K leaves for Winnipeg	<u>12</u> <i>No Scripture Class</i>	<u>13</u> 6am to 6pm Vigil
<u>14</u> 11 am Lecture: ‘Do we need Religion?’ by Prof.Kumar Murty 1:30pm: Vidya Mandir 5pm: RamNam	<u>15</u> Swami K returns from Winnipeg	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u> 9:30 am Soup Kitchen	<u>19</u> 6:00 pm Public Celebration: DURGA PUJA	<u>20</u>
<u>21</u> 6:00 pm Public Celebration: VIJAYA DASHAMI	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u> 9:30am Soup Kitchen	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u> 7:30pm Scripture class: Tattvabodha	<u>27</u>
<u>28</u> 11am Lecture: What do we really want? 1:30pm: Vidya Mandir	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>31</u>			

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Vedanta Society of Toronto’s Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday, **November 18, 2007 at 11:00 am**. Any member wishing to nominate an active and willing member of the Vedanta Society may do so by writing to the Society.

All nominations must be received by November 4, 2007 and be duly proposed and seconded, and approved by Swami Kripamayanda. All our members and friends are requested to attend the meeting. If you are unable to attend, please fill in the proxy form that is included with this newsletter and send it so that it reaches us before November 18.