



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 October 2008

Words to Inspire

“The branch of a coconut tree drops off itself at the proper time, but one has to exert much to tear off the branch before the proper time arrives. Likewise, everything will come about at the proper time.”
(The Gospel of the Holy Mother. Page 201, Section Two)

First Series

(From The Gospel of the Holy Mother, Pages 54, 55 & 56)

Another day I had been to Holy Mother's place, when a monk came and prostrated before her. He said, “Mother, why does the mind become so restless now and then? Why can't I constantly meditate on you? Many worthless thoughts disturb my mind. Useless things we can easily obtain if we simply want them. Shall I never realize the Lord? Mother, please tell me how I can attain peace. Nowadays seldom have I visions. What is the use of this life if I cannot realize Him? It is better to die than to lead such a worthless life.”

Mother: What are you talking of, my child? Do not even think of such things. Can one have the vision of God every day? Sri Ramakrishna used to say, Does an angler catch big carp every day the moment he sits with his rod? Arranging everything about him, he sits with the rod and concentrates. Once in a while a big carp swallows the hook. Many a time he is disappointed. Don't relax the practices for that reason. Do more Japa.

Yogin-Ma: Yes, that is true. The name is identical with Brahman. Even if the mind be not concentrated at the outset, you will succeed ultimately.

Monk: Please tell me, Mother, how many times I should repeat the Name. That may help me to get concentration.

Mother: Ten Thousand times, or even twenty thousand times or as many times as you can.

Monk: One day, Mother, I was kneeling in the shrine and weeping, when I suddenly saw you standing by my side. You said to me, “What do you want?” “I want your grace, Mother” I replied, “as you bestowed it on king Suratha.” Then I added, “No, Mother, that was done by you as Durga. I do not care for that form. I want to see you as you are at present.” With a smile you disappeared. My mind became all the more restless. Now nothing satisfies me. Often I think, “If I cannot realize Her, then what is the use of this life?”

Mother: Why are you so restless, my child? Why don't you stick on to what you have got? Always remember, “I have at least a Mother, if none else.” Do you remember those words of Sri Ramakrishna? He said he would reveal himself to all that take shelter under him, -reveal himself at least on their last day. He will draw all unto Him.

Monk: I have been staying with a householder who is a great devotee. His wife comes from a very aristocratic family. She spends much money for me.

Mother: Ask her not to spend much money for you. The money of the devoted householders is for the benefit of the monks. Their money enables the monks to stay at a place for four months together during the rainy season. It is very inconvenient for the monks to go out (at that time) for begging.

The monk prostrated himself before the mother and left the room.

The significance of the Guru

Swami Pramathananda

The guru, or teacher, holds a very special and venerated position. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* says 'Let your teacher be a god to you'. To master anything, we need the help of a teacher. If we want to become proficient in music or gain expertise in a sport, we need a teacher. When going to a country where one has not been before, one should follow the directions of a guide who knows the way. How much more necessary it is in spiritual life! We can read books and hear lectures, but if we want to really advance in spiritual life, we need the help of a teacher. The teacher brings knowledge to life, as it were.

Swami Vivekananda says "In studying books we are sometimes deluded into thinking that thereby we are being spiritually helped; but if we analyse the effect of the study of books on ourselves, we shall find that at the utmost, it is only our intellect that derives profit from such studies, and not the inner spirit. This inadequacy of books to quicken spiritual growth is the reason why, although almost everyone of us can *speak* most wonderfully on spiritual matters, when it comes to action and the living of a truly spiritual life, we find ourselves so awfully deficient. To quicken the spirit, the impulse *must* come from another soul." (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Volume 3, p. 45)

Not everyone is qualified to be a guru. In secular matters, we may not worry about the character of the teacher. But in spiritual life, the teacher must be a person of pure character. A spiritual teacher must have experienced the truths that are to be taught. It is through this purity and personal experience that one discovers the insight and the power that can help others.

In ancient India, spiritual teachers established *ashramas* where students would gather and learn. Students were expected to live at the *ashrama* because teaching took place all the time. It was not only in formal classes that the students were taught, but in every aspect of daily life. The students would learn discipline and ethical and moral values of life. Many aspects of character cannot be taught, but they are learnt through observation. By observing the noble life of the teacher, the students would learn to mould their own life accordingly. This is why it was important for the schools to be residential.

Once a person came to an *ashrama* and asked what the responsibilities and duties of a student were. The teacher told him that he had to rise early, practise prayer, study the lessons that were given, then do physical work like getting the firewood and other chores, and practise other disciplines. Then the person asked what the duties of a teacher were. The teacher said that mainly, they were to study, contemplate and teach. Hearing this, the person said, 'then, please make me a teacher'. Outwardly, it may not appear that the teacher is doing much. But that state of calmness has only been reached after much discipline. Moreover, the teacher is very active in a way that cannot always be seen externally. A teacher is constantly thinking of the welfare of the students.

Sri Ramakrishna described the spiritual teacher as a matchmaker between the disciple and God, as a matchmaker brings together the lover and the beloved. Through the process of initiation or *mantra diksha* the introduction is made. As the disciple practises repetition of the *mantra*, the obstacles preventing the realization of the

spiritual ideal are slowly removed. The culmination of this process is that the disciple has direct experience of spiritual consciousness.

The *mantra* is not just a word or a phrase. It is the Name of God. It carries spiritual power. In the process of initiation, this power is transmitted in seed form from teacher to student. As a collection of words, it seems to be very ordinary. Its importance is in the power that is latent in it. Once someone took a tiny banyan seed and remarked to Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, "Look, Mother, it is tinier even than the tiniest seed we know. From this will spring a giant tree! How strange!" Mother replied, "Indeed it will. See what a tiny seed is the Name of God. From it in time come divine moods, devotion, love, and spiritual consummation". (*Teachings of Sri Sarada Devi the Holy Mother*, p. 40)

The scriptures are endless and it is easy to get lost in them. But the guru helps us to learn the essence of the scriptures. Sri Ramakrishna says "One understands the scriptures better by hearing them from the lips of the guru or of a holy man. Then one doesn't have to think about their non-essential part". (*Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 476) Again, he said, "The scriptures contain a mixture of sand and sugar, as it were. It is extremely difficult to separate the sugar from the sand. Therefore one should learn the essence of the scriptures from the teacher or from a *sadhu*". (*Gospel*, p. 543)

The teaching of the guru is potent, but its effect will be felt sooner or later depending on the fitness of the student. The Katha

Upanishad says that both the teacher and the student must be wonderful. When the student is ready for the knowledge, the teaching is fruitful sooner. Sri Ramakrishna tells the following story. Once a person went to a teacher and asked to be taken as a student. The teacher said nothing but asked him to follow him to the lake. Both waded into the lake. Then the teacher pressed the would-be student's head into the water and released him after a little while. The teacher asked "What did you feel when you were under water?" He said, "Oh, I felt as if I were dying. I was longing for a breath of air!" The teacher said, "When you have that kind of eagerness to realize God, then you will succeed". For the teaching to be fruitful, there must be eagerness and a desire to learn on the part of the student.

Swami Vivekananda said "to succeed, you must have tremendous perseverance, tremendous will. 'I will drink the ocean' says the persevering soul, 'at my will mountains will crumble up'. Have that sort of energy, that sort of will; work hard, and you will reach the goal". (*Complete Works*, Volume 1, p. 178)

The human guru is an instrument of the divine guru. The yogis say that the teacher of all teachers is *Iswara*, God. The jnanis say that the real teacher is *sat chit ananda* – that Being who is loving consciousness. However we describe it, it is God himself who teaches us through the instrument of the human teacher. This is the real significance of the Guru.

One must perform work. It is only through work that the bondage of work will be cut asunder and one will acquire a spirit of non-attachment.

-Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi

BELUR MATH NEWS

Students of **Viveknagar** (Tripura) school secured the 1st, 4th, 6th and 7th state ranks in All India Engineering Entrance Examination, 2008.

Dr A P J Abdul Kalam, former President of India, visited **Bangalore** Math on 31 May and released the book *A Concise Encyclopaedia of Hinduism* (in three volumes, by Swami Harshananda). Swami Prabhanandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, presided over the function.

The National Olympiad Foundation, New Delhi, judged **Purulia** Vidyapith as the 'Best Performing School' in West Bengal at the Mathematics Olympiad Test, 2007, held at the international level. A class VII student of the Vidyapith, namely Digantanil Giri, secured the 1st position in his group in the state, and the 44th rank at the international level.

Students of Viveknagar Vidyalaya secured the following state ranks (within the first ten) in the State Level National Talent Search Examination, 2007, conducted for Class VIII and Class X students:

Class VIII: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 9th,
Class X: 5th, 7th, 10th.

Tsunami Rehabilitation: Port Blair:

Port Blair centre has set up a Reverse Osmosis (RO) Based Water Treatment Plant for producing potable water from pond / well / rain water, as a part of the Mission's Tsunami Rehabilitation Project. The production capacity of the plant is 13,000 litres of drinking water per day.

Flood Relief:

Medinipur – 51,000 kg *chira*, 5100 kg sugar, 3000 packets of biscuits, and 300,000 halogen tablets to 50,627 victims belonging to 113 villages of Dantan - I & II, Keshiari, Narayangarh and Sabang blocks in Paschim Medinipur district.

Belgharia – 26,910 kg *chira*, 72 kg milk powder, 2691 kg sugar, 3570 packets of biscuits, 3570 candles, 7140 matchboxes and 357,000 halogen tablets to 18,620 flood victims belonging to 11 villages of Dasagram, Gokulpur and Gopinathpur in Purba Medinipur and Paschim Medinipur districts. Besides, the centre rescued, with the help of our speedboat, 219 persons who were stranded owing to the flood.

Fire Relief: Tamil Nadu: Nattarampalli centre distributed 200 kg rice, 32 kg *dal*, vegetables, groceries, 80 packets of biscuits, 8 sets of utensils, 16 blankets, 8 *saris*, 8 *dhotis* and 16 mats to 8 poor families whose houses were gutted by a devastating fire at Mamudimanapalli village of Tirupatur *taluk* in Vellore district.

Guwahati centre conducted a medical camp during Ambubachi Mela at Kamakhya Dham from 22 to 25 June in which 2570 patients were treated. Besides, several poor pilgrims were given clothes and snacks.

A new branch centre of the Ramakrishna Math has been started at **Haripad** in Kerala with the land, buildings, etc received from Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Haripad. Its address is: Ramakrishna Math, P.O. Haripad, Dist. Alleppey, Kerala 690514. Phone: (0)93886-55691.

Swami Atmasthanandaji, President, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the new buildings for boys' high school and co-educational junior basic school at **Jayrambati** centre on 9 June.

Swami Atmasthanandaji also inaugurated the newly constructed building for office and showroom for our literature and Pallimangal products at **Kamarpukur** centre on 18 June, the Snan Yatra day.

Vivekananda University celebrated the third anniversary of its foundation at its Belur campus on 4 July. A special convocation was held on this occasion. Swami Atmasthanandaji, President, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, declared open the newly constructed central building of the University. Dr G Madhavan Nair, Chairman, Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) inaugurated the *Vivekdisha* Village Resource Centre (VRC) project under ISRO-VRC scheme. Professor S K Thorat, Chairman, University Grants Commission, New Delhi, was the Guest-in-Chief. Swami Prabhanandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, presided over the function and awarded diplomas to the students who passed out of the Narendrapur and Ranchi Morabadi Faculty Centres. Professor Shankari Prasad Basu was awarded D Litt (*Honoris Causa*) for his monumental research work on Swami Vivekananda, Sister Nivedita and Subhash Chandra Bose.

SUMMARY OF PAST EVENTS

40th Anniversary Seminar on "Communicating Vedanta" was conducted on 6th September 2008. **Swami Prabhananda**, *General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission* as the Chief Guest; **Swami Tyagananda**, Minister, Vedanta Society of Massachusetts, Boston; **Swami Yogatmananda**, Minister, Vedanta Society of Providence; and **Swami Atmajnanananda**,

Resident Minister, Vedanta Society of Greater Washington DC participated.

The Spiritual Retreat at Dunnville, Ontario was held from Friday September 19 to Sunday September 21. **Swami Sridharananda**, Head of the Vedanta Centre of Sydney, Australia, conducted the retreat and spoke on the topic of '**Sri Ramakrishna - Holy Mother - Swami Vivekananda**'.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sri Sarada Devi Birth Anniversary will be celebrated on Sunday 21st Dec 2008 at 11.00 am. The programme will consist of bhajans, puja, havan, flower offering followed by prasad distribution.

Christmas Eve will be celebrated on Wednesday 24th Dec 2008. The programme includes devotional songs, carols, reading from the Bible, worship, offering of candles 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, October 11, 2008**, 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 October 12, 2008 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 (2nd and 3rd Thursday and 3rd and 4th Tuesday) a month at Roncesvalles Food Sharing, 263 Roncesvalles Avenue, Toronto M6R 2L9. This month, the Soup Kitchen dates are October 9, 16, 21 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, as well as other Vedantic materials.

Vedanta Society of Toronto

Minister and Teacher - Swami Kripamayananda, Ramakrishna Order of India

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture class: <i>'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'</i>	<u>4</u>
<u>5</u> <u>11am</u> Lecture: 'HOW TO CONQUER ANGER'	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u> Durga Puja <u>6:00 pm</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u> VIJAYA DASHAMI PUJA <u>6:30 pm</u>	<u>10</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture class: <i>'Tattvabodha'</i>	<u>11</u> Vigil: 6 am to 6 pm
<u>12</u> <u>11am</u> Lecture: 'NO ONE IS A SINNER' Ram Nam <u>5:00 pm</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen	<u>17</u> NO SCRIPTURE CLASS	<u>18</u>
<u>19</u> 11 am Video: 'GUIDELINES FOR SEEKERS OF GOD' by Swami Adiswarananda VVM: 1-30 pm	<u>20</u>	<u>21</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u> <u>9:30am</u> Soup Kitchen	<u>24</u> <u>7:30pm</u> Scripture class: <i>'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'</i>	<u>25</u>
<u>26</u> 11 am Lecture: 'STEPS TO REALIZATION'	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u> Kali Puja <u>6:30 pm</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>31</u> NO SCRIPTURE CLASS	

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Vedanta Society of Toronto's Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday, **November 23, 2008 at 11:00 am**. Any member wishing to nominate an active and willing member of the Vedanta Society for the Executive Committee may do so by writing to the Society. **All nominations must be received by November 9, 2008** and be duly proposed and seconded, and approved by Swami Kripamayananda. 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 23**.