



MARCH 2010 - VOLUME 08 NUMBER 03

# the Vedanta Kyokai



NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN



## MONTHLY CALENDAR

### • Birthdays •

Swami Yogananda  
Thursday/Mar 4

Ramnavami (Lord Rama)  
Wednesday / Mar 24

### • Zushi Retreat

Sunday, 21 March 11 a.m.  
Talk: "Self Effort or Faith"

All, with family and friends,  
are welcome to attend.

### • ANNOUNCEMENT •

Daytime Volunteers Needed  
April 7-11 for Vedanta Society's  
Indo-Japan Relationship Exhibit  
at the Indian Embassy Gallery  
Any hours between 11 a.m.  
& 5 p.m. contact Kyokai



## ✧ Thus Spake ✧

"Vedanta recognizes no sin, it only recognizes error; and the greatest error, says the Vedanta, is to say that you are weak, that you are a sinner, a miserable creature and that you have no power and you cannot do this or that." ... Swami Vivekananda

"Vishnu alone it is who dwells in you, in me, in everything; empty of meaning is your wrath and the impatience you reveal. Seeing yourself in everyone, have done with all diversity!" ... Sri Shankara

## Kansai Chapter Fetes Vedanta Society's Golden Jubilee

Contributed by Ms. Kaori 'Shanti' Izumida

The Vedanta Society of Japan held a Golden Jubilee event on Sunday, January 24, at the Tenshin Hall of Osaka's Chuo-ward. Sponsored by the Consulate General of India, the Indian Chamber of Commerce-Japan, Indian Social Society of Kobe, Kobe India Club, and Kansai Japan-India Social Society of Osaka, the chief guest speaker of the event was the Honorable Sri Vikas Swarup, Consul General of India, Osaka and author of the Oscar winning film, Slumdog Millionaire.

Additional speakers included Mr. Mukesh Punjabi, Chairman, Indian Chamber of Commerce - Japan, Mr. Keishin Kimura, President, Japan Yoga Therapy Association and PhD. Tomio Mizokami, Professor Emeritus, Osaka University of Foreign Studies and President, Kansai Japan-India Cultural Society.

The event was attended by nearly 500 guests, but no one was turned away as 280 seat venue filled to capacity with overflows sitting in the aisles or watching the 3 monitors set up in the lobby and other areas.

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## Golden Jubilee [from page 1]

Supplies of Swami Medhasananda's book, Swami Vivekananda and Japan, both Japanese and English versions, along with the booklet, Inspirational Messages were completely exhausted. Even stocks of prepared refreshments quickly ran out and an emergency supply of sweets from a local doughnut shop had to be procured.

Although some guests left at the break, the auditorium seating was still filled for the cultural event of the second half featuring Bharatanatyam dance with Ms. Subha Kokubo Chakravorty and her troupe and a sitar performance by veteran Amit Roy with Komura Takashi on tabla.

The event also featured a comprehensive historical exhibit on the pioneers of the modern Indo-Japan

relationship, Swami Vivekananda and Tenshin Okakura.

Even though the celebration was attended beyond capacity, it ran very smoothly and was greatly appreciated thanks to the service of so many volunteers. •

### • Thought of the Month •

*The only medicine for suffering, crime,  
and all the other woes of mankind is  
wisdom.*

*... Thomas Huxley*



**Prof. Mizokami Cuts Ribbon  
at Swami Vivekananda Exhibit**



**Visitors to Swami Vivekananda Exhibit**

## Swami Medhasananda Delivers Welcome Address at Kansai Golden Jubilee Ceremony

Honourable Mr. Vikas Swarup, Consul General of India, Mr. Mukesh Punjabi, President, Indian Chamber of Commerce, Japan, Professor Tomio Mizokami, President, Kansai Japan-India Cultural Society, Mr. Keishin Kimura, President Japan Yoga Therapy Association, other distinguished guests and dear friends, on behalf of the organising committee of the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the Vedanta Society of Japan, a branch of the Ramakrishna Mission headquartered in India and on behalf of myself, I heartily welcome you all to the Kansai Chapter of this celebration.

We have already held the opening ceremony of our Golden Jubilee on the 14th of June last year at the Indian Embassy in Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, who co-hosted the event. The programme was attended by a large number of people, both Japanese and non-Japanese from various cross-sections of society.

An exhibition focusing on the India-Japan relationship and its pioneers, Swami Vivekananda and Okakura Tenshin, was held at the very large Namaste India

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**Swami Medhasananda Delivers Welcome Address  
Kansai Chapter Vedanta Society Golden Jubilee Celebration**

**Welcome Address** [from page 2]

event in Tokyo and drew huge crowds. Organized by our Society, this was the first such exhibit in Japan and visitors highly appreciated the concept and quality of the exhibit and was deeply impressed by the depiction of various facets of the India-Japan relationship and the wonderful personality and message of Swami Vivekananda. I am happy to say that many distinguished visitors, including Consul General Swarup, also visited and enjoyed the exhibit.

In organizing today's event we received the unstinting help, cooperation and guidance of the Consul General, who is himself a celebrity and needs no introduction by me. We are extremely happy that he, in spite of his very busy schedule also kindly agreed to be the Chief Guest of today's celebration and deliver a speech which we are looking forward to hear.

We also gratefully mention that Mr. Mukesh Punjabi, President of the Indian Chamber of Commerce Japan, Mr. L. P. Chablani, President of the Indian Social Society, and Mr. P. S. Chadha, President of the India Club, also offered their help in organizing this event.



**Honorable Viskas Swarup**

We must also mention here that Mr. Yutaka Oasa, Secretary of the Organizing Committee and his dedicated group of volunteers and Mr. R. N. Chakrabarty, Joint Secretary of the Committee and Secretary of the Indian Chamber of Commerce worked very hard to make today's celebration possible. We are immensely thankful to you all.

On this special occasion of the Society's Golden Jubilee denoting fifty years of service in the Land of the Rising Sun, it is appropriate to recall with a deep sense of profound gratitude and respectful homage those persons who contributed in various ways to the birth and growth of this Society as we see it today. A brief account of these contributors will also give us a better perspective regarding our Golden Jubilee.

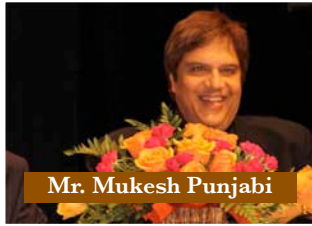
On this historic day of acknowledgment and remembrance we especially recall the late Swami Ranganathanandaji of the Ramakrishna Order, a highly respected religious leader, author and an orator of international repute, who came to Japan in 1958 to give a series of lectures on Indian spiritual and cultural values. It was during this visit that he inspired a committed group of Japanese and Indians in Tokyo to start a Society to preach

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Prof. Nara



Mr. Mukesh Punjabi



Mr. Keishin Kimura



Prof. Mizokami

**Welcome Address** [from page 3]

and practice the lofty teachings of Vedanta, as exemplified by the lives of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

Before the establishment of this Society another Society was founded in 1957 by Narayan Uchigaki, Professor Sandip Tagore and others with similar objectives in Takasaki, near Osaka. Our current Vedanta Society of Japan was formally inaugurated at the Asia Center in Tokyo on May 2, 1959 by Swami Nikhilanandaji, then head of the Vedanta Society of New York, in the presence of an august assembly among whom were Sri C.P.N. Singh, the then Ambassador of India, Nikki Kimura, Professor Emeritus of Kisshyo University, and Professor Hajime Nakamura, the celebrated Indologist. Professors Kimura and Nakamura became President and Vice-President respectively of the first managing committee, while Mr. Sumitra Rao, a retired officer of the British Indian Army stationed in Japan, became its Secretary. We especially remember the long-term, dedicated service provided by Mr. Rao and Mrs. Haru Nakai, who joined the Society later.

The Society was made an official branch of the Ramakrishna Order in 1984 and Swami Siddharthanandaji was assigned first resident monk and president of the Society located in Zushi City near Kamakura. After successfully accomplishing this task he returned to India in 1993 due to failing health and passed away a few years later. We remember with gratitude the pioneering role Siddharthanandaji played as the Society's first president.

During our first 50 years there have been many members, friends and well-wishers of our Society, both Japanese and non-Japanese, especially Indians. In addition to those already mentioned, there are so many others who have been deeply involved in the Society and contributed to our undertaking of numerous activities. A brief account of these activities can be found in the brochure which has been distributed to you today.

As already mentioned, this Society's association with the Indian Embassy in Tokyo began right from its inception with the Indian Ambassador gracing the inaugural meeting of the Society in 1959. Since then most ambassadors and other embassy staff have been supportive of our cause. In January of this year when I first placed the matter of this celebration before His Excellency, his immediate response was very positive. He said to me, "Swamiji, we shall offer you all the help you need for this programme." He then made a very significant remark saying, "We ambassadors come and go back to India, but Swami Vivekananda is our eternal ambassador."

Apart from the ceremony itself, there are three main objectives of this Golden Jubilee. The first is to reach out to as many people of this country as possible and to propagate the message of harmony and universalism as espoused by Vedanta and exemplified by its modern proponents Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda. The second objective is to propagate a message of broad-based spiritual values to bring peace and joy and renewed hope into the lives of all. Our third goal is to promote the deepening relationship between Indian and Japanese communities.

To achieve these goals in Japan, especially in Kansai, the celebration committee decided to organize a Kansai Chapter of the celebration. As is well-known, the Kansai area is comprised of Kyoto, which was the political, cultural and spiritual center of Japan over a long period, Nara, the traditional center of Japanese Buddhism, and Osaka, a prime center of business, trade and manufacturing, holds a special place in the history of this great nation. Hence, it is quite befitting that the present celebration is being held in this important area of Japan.

Though we hold a programme of annual discourse before a small, local group of interested persons in Osaka, this celebration marks the first major step in propagating the wonderful and elevating message of

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## Osaka's Teijin Hall Filled to Capacity



### Welcome Address [from page 4]

Vedanta and Vivekananda by our Society in Kansai. We ardently hope and pray that there should be a serious and sincere follow-up to this celebration with the goal of founding a branch of the Ramakrishna Mission in this area to minister to the spiritual needs of the local people and provide them with mental and spiritual nourishment. We earnestly seek the best wishes and active cooperation of you all to achieve this noble mission.

In this connection let us offer another relevant suggestion. As we know there are already statues of three prominent Indians, namely the poet Rabindranath Tagore, savant Mahatma Gandhi and freedom fighter Netaji Subhas Chandra Basu are installed in various locations around Japan. We should now seriously consider installing a statue of Swami Vivekananda, another great Indian, in this country and it would be quite appropriate to consider Kobe for this purpose. This is where Swami Vivekananda disembarked from a ship in July of 1893 intending to see some of the people and sites of the Japanese interior before proceeding to Chicago to attend the Parliament of Religions.

During this visit Swami Vivekananda had observed and highly appreciated many sterling qualities of the Japanese. Tenshin Okakura, the famous art critic and scholar later went to Belur Math to invite Swamiji to

revisit Japan. Unfortunately, this return visit could not take place due to Swamiji's failing health. The Indo-Japanese relationship pioneered by these two great personalities was further strengthened by the repeated visits of the poet Rabindranath Tagore.

We, the present generations of Japanese and Indians, can achieve much to our mutual benefit by walking that path first trekked by these great pioneers. Our Society, a branch of the Ramakrishna Order founded by Swami Vivekananda, is committed to following and to achieving that which Swamiji defined and dreamt for us. The planning for today's programme, is but one example reflecting our efforts to foster this relationship between the two communities. We believe such efforts will pave the way for a new kind of leadership, one urgently needed in the world, by Japan and India together with China, the three great nations of Asia.

We are also aware, however, that this relationship ought not to focus only upon our two countries, but must be global in perspective. A fully developed Japan and India could ultimately contribute to what we may call a fully developed world. This is the vision of great minds like Vivekananda, Tagore and Okakura.

Finally, I welcome one and all again and earnestly seek your cooperation and best wishes and also the blessings

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**Welcome Address** [from page 5]

of the holy trio, Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda for the complete success of today's programme, as well as for the rest of

this year's programmes in celebration of the Vedanta Society of Japan's Golden Jubilee!

Thank you for your kind attention, Om Peace! Peace! Peace! •

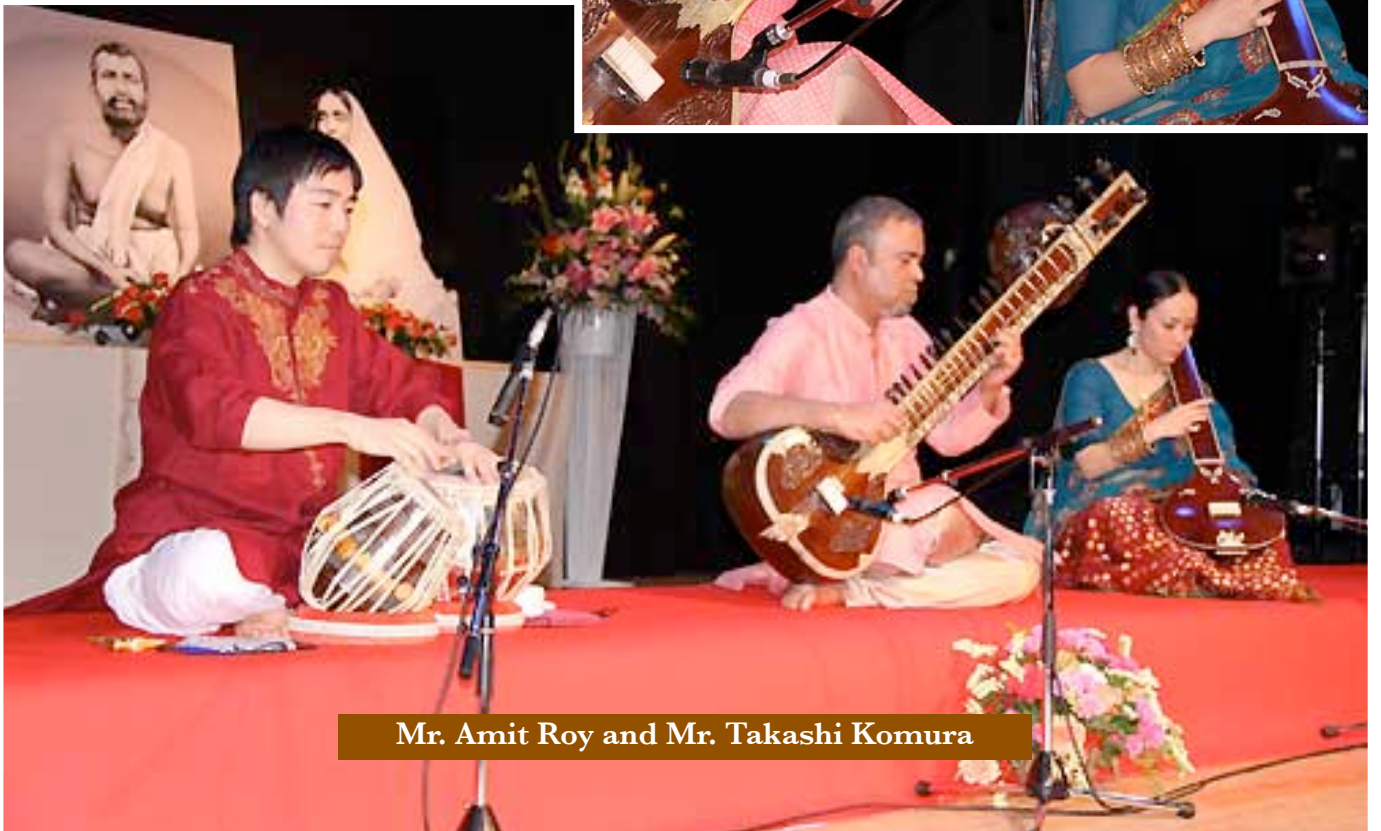


**Swami Medhasananda Presents Gift to Mr. Owasa, Secretary of the Kansai Organizing Committee**



**Bharatanatyam Dancers**





Mr. Amit Roy and Mr. Takashi Komura



Devotees and Volunteers  
Kansai Golden Jubilee

• A Story to Remember •  
Beginner's Mind

Once, a professor went to a Zen Master. He asked him to explain the meaning of Zen. The Master quietly poured a cup of tea. The cup was full but he continued to pour. The professor could not stand this any longer, so he questioned the Master impatiently, "Why do you keep pouring when the cup is full?"

"I want to point out to you," the Master said, "that you are similarly attempting to understand Zen while your mind is full. First, empty your mind of preconceptions before you attempt to understand Zen."

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