



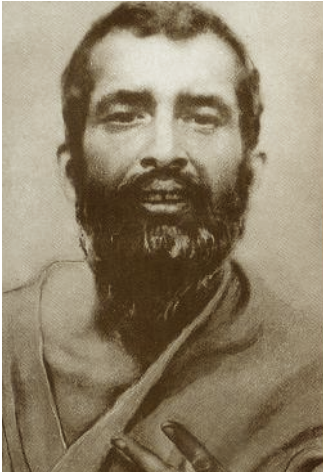
September 2012 - Volume 10 Number 09

日本ヴェダンタ協会ニュースレター

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

OCTOBER Calendar



Birthdays / Pujas

Swami Abhedananda
Tuesday 9 October

Swami Akhandananda
Monday 15 October

Durga Puja
Sunday 21 October

Kyokai Events

• **Bhagavad Gita** •
Monthly discourse 2-4pm
Indian Embassy Tokyo

• **Yoga-Asana** •
Sundays 3~4:30pm
October 7, 14, 21, 28,
Zushi Center Annex Building

• **NO October Retreat** •
Swami Medhasananda
will visit India from
October 10 to November 10

• **Nara Narayana** •
(Service to the Homeless)
Friday 26 October
Food Distribution
Call Ms. Sato 090-6544-9304



✧ Thus Spake ✧

"Common men talk bagfuls of religion, but do not practise even a grain of it. The wise man speaks little, even though his whole life is religion expressed in action."

... Sri Ramakrishna

"However many holy words you read, however many you speak, what good will they do you if you do not act on upon them?"

... Lord Buddha

Swami Visits Philippine Society August 2012

Summary report contributed by Enrico Colombo

Swami Medhasananda visited the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of the Philippines for the second time this year between August 23 and August 27.

Maharaj has visited Manila so often during the last ten years that some of the programme activities during his stays have become a sort of consolidated tradition. Such is the case, for instance, of the early morning programs of chanting, reading, and commentary on the Bhagavad Gita; meditation periods and guided meditations; and accordingly, the evening programs with Arati songs, reading from the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, and meditation.

Again, some of the practical arrangements organised for his visits have also become a kind of 'routine.' For instance the unceasing efforts by some lady devotees to prepare especially delicious and healthy meals for the swami and the devotees and friends attending in the Centre's activities and talks.

Obviously the significance and relevance of Swami Medhasa-

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Philippines (from page 1)

nanda's morning and evening programmes are not conducted or intended as routine, but practise for the spiritual uplift and benefit of the participants. As for the efforts of those who take care of preparing meals, sometimes providing for many attendees, these efforts, again, these and other necessary chores to accommodate large gatherings are not conducted as routine, even though some devotees and friends partaking in the meals may now naturally expect that specially prepared dishes will served each and every time.

Swami Medhasananda's visit this August included an important new element; a special focus on preparations necessary to ensure that the 150th birthday anniversary of Swami Vivekananda be celebrated next year in the Philippines, as it will be in so many other countries.

For this project Maharaj and a few members of the Filipino Society met with the Indian Ambassador and several plans were subsequently discussed by



Swami Medhasananda at the Society on how best to celebrate this important event and, especially, how to convey Swamiji's main messages to the people of the Philippines. A special meeting of the members and friends of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of the Philippines was held on Sunday morning, August 26, to discuss the above programs as well as other aspects of the Filipino Society's activities.

On Sunday afternoon, August 26, Swami Medhasananda gave a public talk at the Manila Centre on the theme: 'Is God a Reality or a Myth?' The talk was attended by a good and attentive audience and was followed by a question and answer session.

To the utter disappointment of the organisers, however, the audio and recording system, which had been successfully tested repeatedly before the talk, suddenly experienced total failure right after the beginning of the lecture. For this reason no recording of Swami's Manila talk is available and this reporter was unable to prepare a transcript. •



Mitakesan Outdoor Summer Retreat

Summary report contributed by Ms. Miwako Tanabe



Our annual summer retreat was held again at the Japanese-style Nobori Inn on Mitakesan (Mount Mitake) between Friday 27 July and Sunday 29 July. Such long-term spiritual retreats do not take place at the Vedanta Society's Zushi Centre or everyday locations, as one of the retreat's purposes is continual introspection in a quiet place away from one's day-to-day life and family. It helps us contemplate and learn what the purposes of life are; what we are doing to achieve them; what is necessary for self-development; and how we should live in a stable happiness, by looking back on how we live and feel every day. As Maharaj said, "Introspection is the steering wheel of the car of life", we cannot reach a destination in life if we have brakes and an accelerator but no steering wheel.

Twenty-four participants, thirteen of whom attended for the first time, worked together after arriving at the Inn, arranging the altar in one room and prepared our minds for arati (vespers) and meditation. The retreat commenced under the direction of Swami Medhasananda, focused on meditation, arati, devotional songs, study, and yoga.

During arati we sang devotional songs to the harmonium played by Swami, including some Japanese ones, and we read from the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna in turns. We then participated in a guided meditation, relaxing both physically and mentally while concentrating on the now, not the past or future. We repeated Aum, the holy mantra, and felt the vibration of Vedic mantras chanted by Maharaj. We also prayed that everyone may be happy and have peace of mind. Our thoughts were gradually guided towards the Supreme Soul filling the universe. Focusing on this Existence, we meditated on the Supreme Soul as Eternal and Pure Consciousness, that 'I' am the same Pure Consciousness, that the Supreme Soul and 'I' are one, and that 'I' am Sat Chit Ananda (Absolute Existence, Absolute Knowledge, Absolute Bliss). Over time 'I' or Supreme Consciousness spread throughout nature and everything around us and we felt and meditated that everything everywhere is filled with Eternity. Our guided meditation ended with the chanting of Aum again.

Some participants later said that they were
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Outdoor Retreat (from page 3)

glad to be able to meditate for the first time, while some noted that they experienced the importance of choosing a holy object or subject of concentration in meditation and were impressed that they could reflect on themselves more deeply than ever.

The morning programme during the retreat was as follows: rising at 5 am, meditation at 5:20, Managalarati at 6 am followed by yoga exercises directed by Mr. Arai, instructor of Tokyo Yoga Centre, and getting ready both physically and mentally for the day. After a blessed breakfast prepared by Swami, we listened to his discourse "Religion and Non-religion."

On the afternoon of the 2nd day, Dr Steven Morgan, associate professor at Rikkyo University talked on "Practice" and lectured on Religious Songs. He specialises in religious music and, in addition to teaching at university, recently engages in a wider range of activities including conducting a choir and composing. His hometown in Illinois has a liberal atmosphere with many different churches, and he and his family were familiar with other religions and religious music. He explained that religious music was categorised into the following three: admiring God, spreading His teachings, and supplicating Him. Playing religious music on the player and himself, he discussed the relation between music and religion, such as Judaism before and after the taking of the Holy Land, Christianity before and after Constantine the Great, Islam, Sufism, and Hinduism, which was very interesting. He has been interested in how religious music connects to religious life for the last few years and started studying Vedanta. For the Requiem Concert held at his university last year, he composed a Requiem containing Christian prayers and Tagore's verses, as well as Bud-

• Thought of the Month •

"We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence, therefore,
is not an act but a habit."

... Aristotle

dhist and Native American poetry. At the Q&A session, we discussed intriguing topics, such as why there is no religious song tradition in Japan and how we should be careful about ecstatic reactions to religious songs.

Time flew by and we came to the last programme, the Q&A session with Swami. Many of us asked questions about the reincarnation of God. We then each expressed how we felt about the retreat, these comments I found very interesting. It may seem that we had a busy schedule from morning till night, but Swami advised us fondly to take the retreat as an example so that we could plan the time to meditate, learn spirituality, do yoga, take exercise, and focus on work, and try to complete a plan for change and self-development.

With the help of everyone, including those who joined for the first time, the wonderful retreat ended successfully. I realised again how important it is to spend all twenty-four hours of the day in spiritual training and was impressed with the benefits of spending much of this time with the swami. I thank Thakur, Holy Mother and Swamiji. I thank Swami Medhasanandaji for his universal love. I thank those who organised the retreat and then together provided support during it. I thought that being universal, as Swami had mentioned, meant starting to feel others as one's own family, and as the programme came to an end, I felt more like we were all family. •

(Translated from Japanese by Ms. Satsuki Yokota)

Swami Visits Annapurna Farm in Kumamoto

Summary report contributed by Ms. Ravi Masaki

On 12 August 2012, we invited Swami Medhasananda to Annapurna Farm in Kumamoto where he gave a discourse titled "Jnana Yoga - Light of Inner Knowledge." This year approximately fifty people joined from various areas, most of whom had moved here to the island of Kyushu after the Great East Japan Earthquake.

As we knew some of the participants were hearing such words as Vedanta and Sri Ramakrishna for the first time, as the event organiser, in plan-

ning the event we spent many hours wondering how all of them could best learn from Maharaj's discourse. After the programme, however, when we discussed how we felt about the response, as if he knew what we were thinking Swami said, "Today's participants didn't come to me or to you. They came to Thakur."

On hearing this, I felt I was released from ego hidden behind the responsibility and obsession

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Kumamoto (from page 4)

of making the event better. How could the speaker himself say they did not come to hear his discourse? I had never met such a speaker or artist before. It was an eye-opening experience. Ignorance caused by 'I-ness' and 'my-ness' seemed washed away in an instant by the light of knowledge.

to discriminate between our own deeds for satisfying the ego and those for serving God, the solutions to a number of issues of conflicts, environmental destruction, poverty, etc.

Maharaj came to Kumamoto to sow the seeds of light of India, which will be the guidepost for us to survive the turbulent world we currently face. •

The participants asked questions such as how

(Translated from Japanese by Ms. Satsuki Yokota)

• A Story to Remember •

Koopa-Manduka - The Frog That Lived in a Well

This is the story of a frog that lived in a well. It is a very popular folk tale and has many versions. This version is close to the one that Swami Vivekananda told the world in one of his speeches at the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago on September 15, 1893.

Once upon a time, there lived a frog in a nice, deep well. It had lived there for a long time. It was born there and brought up there. Every day this frog fed on the worms and bacilli that lived in the water of the well, and became a fat frog with a lot of energy.

Well, one day another frog that lived in the sea came by and fell into the well. Our well frog asked the sea frog, "Where are you from?"

"I am from the sea," answered the sea frog

"The sea!" exclaimed the well frog. "How big is that? Is it as big as my well?", and he took a leap from one side of the well to the other.

"My friend", said the sea frog, "how can you compare the sea with your little well?"

Taking another leap the well frog asked, "Is your sea so big?"

Shocked the sea frog exclaimed "What nonsense you speak, to compare the sea with your little well!"

"Well, Well," said the well frog, "nothing can be bigger than my well; there can be nothing bigger than this. Angered he then shouted, "This fellow is a liar, turn him out."

Swami Vivekananda told this story to explain why it was that people in this world are unable to live at peace with one another. It is petty differences like these that we human beings are unable to resolve, which then causes hate and divisiveness.

... www.balagokulam.org

Issued by: The Vedanta Society of Japan (Nippon Vedanta Kyokai)
4-18-1 Hisagi, Zushi-shi, Kanagawa-ken 249-0001 JAPAN
Phone: 81-46-873-0428 Fax: 81-46-873-0592
Website: <http://www.vedanta.jp> Email: info@vedanta.jp