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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

NOVEMBER Calendar

Birthdays

Swami

Vijnanananda

Saturday, 16 November

Kyokai Events

Sri Sri Kali Puja

Zushi Centre Annexe
Saturday, 2 November
19:00 Puja, Pushpanjali,
Homa Fire 21:30 Prasad

Sunday, 3 November

Yamagata Satsanga

Monday, 4 November

Sendai Satsanga

Swami Visits Chicago

Wednesday, 6 November
to Saturday, 16 November

November Zushi Retreat

Sunday, 17 November

Akanda Japam

Saturday, 23 November
Contact Zushi Centre

Osaka Discourse

Saturday, 23 November

Shikoku Satsanga

24-25 November

Swami Vivekananda's 150th Birth Celebration in Kansai

Saturday, 30 November
May Theatre Osaka

**Please check homepage
for all event contact info**

www.vedanta.jp

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## ✧ Thus Spake ✧

*"You have to grow from the inside out. None can teach you, none can make you spiritual. There is no other teacher but your own soul."*

... Swami Vivekananda

*"Reality can be experienced only with the eye of understanding, not just by a scholar. What the moon is like must be seen with one's own eyes. How can others do it for you?"*

... Sri Shankara

### Monthly Zushi Retreat

#### "The Divine Personality of Sri Krishna"

A talk by Swami Medhasananda on August 18, 2013

On August 18, 2013 the Zushi Monthly Retreat of Vedanta Society of Japan celebrated the birth anniversary of Sri Krishna. At 10:30 the main shrine room began to fill with visitors as Swami Medhasananda put the finishing touches to the food offerings and flowers adorning the altar. He then ceremoniously offered prayers and incense and bowed prostrate before the altar where he sat in silent meditation briefly. Copies of the Gita and song and prayer file folders were past out and the swami led the congregation in Vedic peace prayers, chanting from the Gita which was also read in Japanese, and a bhajan to Krishna. He then gave the following talk:

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## Indo-Japan Relationship Exhibition at Namaste India Festival Tokyo 2013



*Ambassador Wadhwa, Mr. Hira, Prime Minister Mori*

As part of the the year-long birth anniversary celebration of Swami Vivekananda in Japan, an exhibition on the Indo-Japan Relationship and Swami Vivekananda and Okakura Tenshin was organised by the Vedanta Society of Japan in collaboration with the Embassy of India, Tokyo at the annual Namaste India Festival in Tokyo's Yোগogi Park on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of September. The exhibition was sponsored by Mr. Ryōko Hira, a board member of the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Japan and Chairman of the Sathya Sai Education Foundation, Japan.

Highlights of the exhibit were archived photos of the historical relationship between India and Japan and the pioneers of the relationship in the Modern Age, Swami Vivekananda and Okakura Tenshin, the famous Japanese art scholar and author; The Life of Swami Vivekananda presented in a series of posters and photos; a display of famous world personalities and political leaders who have noted Vivekananda in speeches; and a display of books on and by Swami Vivekananda in several languages of the world. The captions on nearly all the photos and posters were in both Japanese and English, although a few were in Japanese alone.

The Vedanta Society of Japan was honoured that the ribbon-cutting ceremony was performed by former Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori, who was accompanied by Ambassador of India, H.E. Mrs. Deepa Gopalan Wadhwa. Prime Minister Mori also officially released the Society's new DVD on Swami Vivekananda. All visitors were also offered a gift packet featuring a booklet of Swami Vivekananda's inspiring messages along with the Society's catalogue of Japanese publications and contact information.

An estimated two thousand visitors viewed the exhibition of the pioneers of the modern-era Indo-Japanese Relationship, many of whom became reacquainted with Okakura Tenshin, with the vast majority learning of Swami Vivekananda for the first time, being highly impressed by his life and message. In fact, some expressed



*Prime Minister Mori offers bouquet to Okakura Tenshin and Swami Vivekananda*



their surprise at learning the unique theme of the exhibit in a short questionnaire on visitor impressions requested at the exit. The Austrian Ambassador, Dr. Bernhard Zimburg, and his wife were also among the distinguished guests who visited.



Swami giving instructions to volunteers



Volunteers awaiting arrival of Prime Minister Mori

Thanks are due to the teams of devotees who served various functions in preparations before, during and after the Festival; the core group traveling substantial distances daily. The collecting, designing, translating, mounting and displaying of various elements of this exhibition was a tremendous task and could not have been such a success without the devoted assistance of so many. It should also be noted that more volunteers manned the Society's other venue at the Festival, their Ganga Bookstore, in an entirely different area.

Thanks are also due to the Swami Vivekananda 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary Celebration Office at Belur Math and various branches of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission the world over for sending us books on Swami Vivekananda published in various languages, making for an impressive addition to the exhibition. •



Lots of activity at the Ganga Bookstore

## **Sri Krishna** (from page 1)

"There is an interesting theory about why God created the universe in the Upanishad. Although God, or Absolute Truth, is the only existence, He feels lonely and cannot play on his own. So in order to play, many living things and various other inanimate things are necessary and He creates the universe. This is called the theory of play, or Lila and may be unique to Hinduism.

God sometimes does not have a form, and sometimes He does. When He is formless, He is Brahman, or Absolute Truth. When He has a form, He lives in a special abode that is called Heaven. There are different Heavens too, such as the Krishna-loka, Jesus-loka and Buddha-loka, where God and virtuous people who have realised God live together.

Here in this world people have different qualities; some are mischievous, some unreligious. God incarnates Himself and comes here to enjoy playing with various people in various ways.

In the Bhagavad Gita, there are two famous verses This means, 'When those irreligious or immoral people increase in number, I (God) am born and give religious teachings. I am also born to kill the bad and protect and lead my devotees.' These lines do not mention the idea of coming to play though. On the other hand, the Bhagavatam refers to His play. Play is one of the main reasons God is born here to this world. God does not have fun if He dwells in Heaven all the time. So He comes here to sing, dance and talk with His devotees, lead to faith those who do not believe in Him, and transform those less religious to more religious. That is why He incarnates Himself.

In Hinduism Sri Krishna is one of ten major incarnations of God, according to one interpretation, while twenty-four incarnations are to appear in another interpretation, and in yet another view, there is no set number

of incarnations the Lord will take. Among the incarnations that have appeared thus far, Sri Krishna is the most popular among Hindus.

Why is this? Because Krishna's life is so very interesting and so dramatic, and we find so many interesting episodes noted from His childhood to His passing. So people love to read the stories of Sri Krishna's life.

To narrate just a few: He was born in a prison where, to spare Himself from the evil King Kansa, He instructed His father, Vasudev, who was imprisoned, to exchange Him with the female child born to Queen Yasoda and King Nanda in Gokul. Then Vasudev's chains were loosened, the prison guards fell to sleep and the gates opened. It was raining heavily and the river Yamuna had risen so high that Vasudev became worried how to protect the child. Suddenly a many headed serpent spread its hoods to protect Baby Krishna from the rain. We have to remember here that this is a divine being with a mission, and by a mere wish nature comes to help. Then the Yamuna River parted and they could cross, Vasudev exchanged infants, and returned to his cell with the baby girl born to Yashoda. From this we see from His birth itself, Sri Krishna's story is so interesting and there are so many more. And though we read of these incidents many times, they never become boring.

There are also the many qualities of Sri Krishna and His many-sided personality. For example He was a knower of all scriptures. He was a philosopher - of course you can understand this from reading the Baghadad Gita and Bhagavatam which contain His deeply spiritual teachings, from which we have no doubt of His greatness as a philosopher. He possessed the greatest manifestation of divinity. He was a great warrior. By reading the Mahabharata one can know what a great statesman He was. He was also a loving son; an intelli-

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## **Sri Krishna** (from page 5)

gent student with great respect for His teachers; a loving brother and friend, and a loving husband. He was a great teacher as well. He was an idealist, yet intensely practical.

Again, if one reads the Mahabharata one will be amazed at the practical wisdom He had. Because of Him the Pandavas won the battle of Kurukshetra. Although Krishna was the greatest warrior, He didn't fight, He just advised and guided the Pandavas. There were so many opposing aspects of his personality. For example, one moment His is a normal human being, and the very next His divinity is revealed. We see these same things in the life of Sri Ramakrishna as well, and this can make devotees confused. Sri Krishna was very kind, and at the same time very stern: 'Soft as a flower, strong as a thunderbolt.'

Krishna was so very attached to His friends and others, yet so detached at any time. One moment it appears as if He is so attached, the next moment He just lets go. In Him we see a wonderful combination of attachment and detachment. Our problem is we become so attached to people and things, we cannot let go. We also can see the other problem where some monks are only dry and detached and show no feelings at all. That is not the ideal! The ideal is to become attached and detached at will and Sri Krishna manifested these two qualities. One moment He is full of fun, the next very serious. It is these seemingly contradictory qualities we see in Sri Krishna that makes Him so very interesting and attractive and unique.

There is no detailed biography of Buddha, but through most of the images produced to represent Him, a more serious personality comes to mind. Of course, very compassionate and kind, but we don't have any stories of Buddha having fun. We don't find much fun with Ram Chandra either. We can say this of Christ, too. But compared to these great ones, we find a lot of

fun in Sri Krishna. If one is only serious, it is boring. If one is only fun seeking, he may be shallow.

Vivekananda had this quality - blending the two, as did the Master, Sri Ramakrishna. One moment he is joking with the devotees and suddenly he dives into samadhi and everyone becomes calm and quiet. So quiet one cannot hear a pin drop. And the fun begins again with song and dance and talk of God as He comes back to normal consciousness.

Sri Krishna was also the embodiment of many spiritual ideals. In the practice of devotion there are many spiritual ideals, and one is that one may worship God and as one's own child. We love children so much, and we can apply this same attitude toward God, and there are devotees who worship Krishna as a baby. You can also have the same attitude toward your own child, meaning that when you attend to your child, remember that you are really attending to God. See Krishna in your child and in every baby. This is also a way of spiritual realisation.

One can also worship Krishna as a brother; God as one's own brother. One can also worship Krishna as a friend. In Krishna's story we find many boyhood friends, and Krishna also manifested this aspect; to look upon God as one's dear friend. Krishna is also worshipped as the Master and we can worship God as our Master. In the Ramayana we see that story of Hanuman and Rama, that is the relationship. In the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna realizes Krishna is not only his friend, but his Master.

Krishna can also be one's sweetheart which is a very high ideal. As such it is a difficult path and it is better not to try it unless one is absolutely pure and is free from body-consciousness. For example in the story of Krishna we find the gopis, or milkmaids, swooning over Him. They have

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## Sri Krishna (from page 6)

their own husbands and families, yet they look upon Krishna with such love and respect as God. So as a sweetheart it can be considered, in fact, an extra-marital relationship, but it is very, very pure. For in their love for Krishna there is no body-consciousness and no lust at all in their minds. This is why it was possible for them to look upon Sri Krishna as their sweetheart who is nonetheless God.

Sri Krishna manifested these many forms of human relationship that the devotee may have with God. In Him there is also the greatest manifestation of divinity which are described in detail in his life-story.

We also see how Sri Krishna still influences so many people if, for example, we only consider the Bhagavad Gita, and how many editions of it have been published in languages around the world. In Japanese alone there are six or seven different translated versions. What is the impact of the Gita? The Bhagavad Gita was only available in India until the nineteenth century, and since it was translated into English, Sri Krishna has become global. In the middle ages there was a Persian translation and from that came a few European translations. The much later English version, however, was a direct translation from the Sanskrit. So many American and European philosophers, like Emerson and Schopenhauer, became greatly influenced by the Gita.

Once a monk asked Swami Saradanandaji, 'Why is the Bhagavad Gita so highly esteemed?' In reply to this question the swami asked, "Can you show me another scripture like the Gita?" To this the disciple could not answer. Each and every scripture is very important, but the Bhagavad Gita is very special in the sense that it is so universal, so rational, so deeply spiritual and so harmonistic. Can you imagine, the Gita which has been declared about three thousand years old is still so relevant

– so popular?

Now let me share some of the stories on Sri Krishna's so that we can see both his human and divine sides. Let me also request that you read for yourselves the Bhagavatam, and of course, the Bhagavad Gita. These two books are very important and will sustain you throughout your life.

We see representations of Sri Krishna with either blue or black skin tone. The meaning of the word 'krishna', in fact, is 'black,' but He is often painted as blue. Why? Because black and blue are the colours of relative infinity. Look at the sky. It is blue. Look at the deep water of the ocean, sometimes it is blue, sometimes it looks black. Blue and black are the colours of nature's relative infinity. Yet if we go near the sky there is no colour. When we get close and hold water from the sea in our hands, there is no colour. In one aspect God has the finiteness of colour, in another He has none. In the same manner, in one aspect Krishna has form, and if we closer or merge into Krishna consciousness we find He is formless.

According to one explanation, 'One who cultivates the heart of the devotee is Krishna.' And what is the product of this cultivation? Devotion. Purity. Kindness. Love. When Krishna cultivates our hearts, these will grow. It is the same with Buddha, with Christ, and Sri Ramakrishna. In this way Krishna is the symbol of divinity.

Now for a story. Krishna was a very naughty child. I often hear parents complain about their mischievous child. If they read the stories of Sri Krishna's childhood, they would realise how peaceful and quiet

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### • Thought of the Month •

People living deeply have no fear of death.

... Anais Nin

## **Sri Krishna** (from page 7)

their own child is by comparison. Such a mischievous child was Krishna. In His locality many milkmaids and cowherds lived making butter, cream, yogurt, buttermilk, many kinds of sweets, etc. Krishna's parents were wealthy and there was no lack of food and milk products, but Krishna was not satisfied with that. He would go with friends and steal butter and other things from the neighbours' house. Then He would feed the monkeys with his plunder and finally break the vessels they came in. So the ladies of the village would often come and complain to Yasoda, Krishna's mother, about his mischievous behaviour. 'You must control him. Bind him if you must.'

Naturally that made Yasoda very angry and she would scold young Krishna, 'Why do you steal from the neighbours? Do we not have plenty here? And you destroy their pots!' Krishna would deny His actions and tell His mother that the neighbours do not like Him and that is why they concoct such stories. Exasperated she sought to bind Him with rope, but each time the knot was just a little too short and more rope was required. No matter how much rope

was added, it was always just slightly too short to bind Him. Her efforts to tie Krishna made Yasoda grow very tired. Seeing His mother's plight, Krishna, with a mischievous smile, allowed Himself to be tied. The implication of the story is that Krishna is infinite. How can one bind infinity. No matter how much rope Yasoda added, she could not bind Him. Thus being compassionate, the infinite becomes the finite. We see two aspects of God constantly in His incarnations: infinite and finite. One moment their divine aspect, the next their human aspect.

The child Krishna, although surrounded with wealth and no shortage of food, would also take soil and put it into his mouth. Seeing this Yasoda tried to wipe the dirt from his mouth. Krishna resisted and would not open his mouth and let her remove the soil. Yasoda then forced His mouth open and Krishna opened wide and she saw the whole universe, including herself, inside His mouth. Yasoda was shocked and the next moment Krishna became the child again. Sri Krishna is God. The whole universe is in Him. In our case we are in the universe, the universe is not in us. Krishna was both in the universe and the universe was in Him." •

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## **Swami Medhasananda Participates in the Manila Celebrations of Swami Vivekananda's 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary from 11-15 September 2013**

Swami Medhasananda visited Manila from 11 to 16 September 2013 to participate in the celebrations of Swami Vivekananda's 150th Birth Anniversary organized by The Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of the Philippines. He was joined from 13-16 September by Swami Bodhasarananda, former President of Advaita Ashram, Mayawati, India and now a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, India.



*Discussion of event plans with Swamis and key Celebration Committee members.*

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## Manila (from page 8)

Upon his arrival on 11 September from Narita, Swami Medhasananda was welcomed by Pushpa Ganguly and brought to the Society Centre. Swami went immediately to work by asking details of the celebration activities, of which he was briefed by Carlo Colombo and later in detail by Anand Chiplunkar.

On 12 September, immediately after lunch, the swami visited the on-going Manila International Book Fair, where the Society displayed several books of the Ramakrishna Order. Swami then returned to the Society Centre, accompanied by Mrs. Nanay Flor, a retired school teacher and local devotees. There were no special programs on 13 September and Swami spent time in the Society and welcomed Swami Bodhasarananda, who arrived from Malaysia.

Swami Medhasananda had another detailed rehearsal of all arrangements on 14 September morning with devotees including Arlene and Oyet, Abhra and Ria, Anand and Aparna, Carlo and Enrico, Moises, Nirmal and Pushpa, Rajat, Shantanu and Soma.

Swami attended the main event organized for 14 September 2013 at a centrally located theater in Makati, Metro Manila's business district. The event was attended by about four hundred persons. Along with Swami Bodhasarananda, Swami Medhasananda recited hymns and read out the



*Former President Ramos releases souvenir magazine on Vivekananda*

message received by the Philippine Society from Most Revered President Maharaj of Belur Math, India. Speeches were delivered by Swami Bodhasarananda, H. E. Fidel V. Ramos, former President of the Philippines, and H. E. Amit Dasgupta, the Ambassador of India to the Philippines. This was followed by a presentation of Indian classical dance, "Arpana" as tribute to Swami Vivekananda, performed by students of Mrs. Shanti Sreedhar from the UP Filipiniana Dance Company and Natya Mandala. Books regarding the Ramakrishna Order were also sold at the event.

Swami Medhasananda also participated in the celebration event held on Sunday 15 September. In the morning, one hundred indigent families of the Horseshoe community, where the Society is located, received free rice and grocery items at the hands of the two Swamis. Later in the afternoon, there was a special program at the Society's seat comprising classical music by Filipino devotees and a discourse by Swami Bodhasarananda on the theme "How Can One Combine One's Secular Life with Spiritual Life".

Swami Medhasananda's daily routine started at 6.30 AM with Vedic chanting, reading from the Bhagawad Gita with commentary, and a short meditation after which Swami and several devotees in attendance enjoyed breakfast. In the eve-

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*Food distribution arranged for local families at the Society's Ashram*

**Manila** (from page 9)

ning, Arati was performed at 7:30 PM, followed by readings from the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, with some explanation and a meditation. At dinner time several devotees would gather to enjoy Swami's presence and the food delicacies prepared, as always with great love and care, by some lady devotees of the Society, particularly Pushpa, Aparna, Soma, Kasturi and Manjusha.

Swami departed for Tokyo on the morning of 16 September. He was escorted to the airport by Nirmal and Pushpa. •



*Main Event Invocation*





*Celebration Volunteers*

• **A Story to Remember** •

**Attachment and Detachment**

The Zen Master Hakuin (1686-1769) travelled extensively to learn from other masters. When he was 32 years old, he returned to the Shoin-ji, the temple in his home town of Hara, in present-day Shizuoka Prefecture. Here he devoted himself to teaching a growing number of disciples. Hakuin was praised by his neighbours as a teacher living an exemplary life.

A beautiful Japanese girl whose parents owned a food store lived near him. One day without warning, her parents discovered that she was pregnant.

This made her parents angry. The girl would not confess who the man was, but after much harassment, she named Hakuin as the father. In great anger the parents went to the Zen Master and scolded him in front of all his students. All Hakuin would say was "Is that so?"

After the baby boy was born, it was entrusted to Hakuin's care. By this time he had lost his reputation. His disciples have left him. However Hakuin was not disturbed, and enjoyed taking care of the little boy. He obtained milk and other essentials the boy needed from his neighbours.

A year later, the girl-mother couldn't stand it any longer. She confessed the truth to her parents— that the real father of the boy was not Hakuin but a young man working in the local fish-market.

The father and mother of the girl went to Hakuin at once. They asked his forgiveness and apologised profusely to get the boy back.

Although Hakuin loved the child as his own, he was willing. In giving up the boy, all he said was: "Is that so?"

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