



DECEMBER 2015 - Volume 13 Number 12

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

January Calendar

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Birthdays

Sri Sri Ma Sarada Devi

Friday, Jan 1st

Swami Shivananda

Tuesday, Jan 5th

Swami Saradananda

Friday, Jan 15th

Swami Turiyananda

Saturday, Jan 23rd

Sri Sri Swamiji

Sunday, Jan 31st

Kyokai Events

• New Year's • Kalpataru

Friday, January 1st

Zushi Centre

11:30 Gathering

14:00 Leave Centre for

→ Buddha in Kamakura →

Catholic Church → Shinto Shrine

Please Contact: Kyokai
(045-873-0428)

• Sri Sri Ma • Sarada Devi

Birth Anniversary

Sunday, January 17

Zushi Annexe

(10:30-16:30)

10:30 Puja, Pushpanjali

12:30 Prasad

14:45 Reading,

Discourse,

Music program

16:30 Tea

**See page 7 for more
EVENTS and details!**

✧ 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

"If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you."

- Jesus, the Christ

August Zushi Retreat 2015
Sri Krishna Birth Anniversary

"The Nature of Sri Krishna's Maya"

A talk by Swami Medhasananda

Today we are celebrating the birthday of Sri Krishna, though according to the Indian calendar, His birthday this year is actually 5 September.

The topic we take up for discussion now is 'The Nature of Sri Krishna's Maya.' Earlier we read aloud stories from the Bhagavatam on His life. In one of the stories His mother, Yashoda, decided to tie the mischievous child Krishna with a rope so He would not get into mischief. She tried once, but the rope fell short by two fingers. Then she added another rope, yet it still fell short by two fingers again.

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Sri Krishna's Maya (from page 1)

Although she tried many times, each time she added another rope, it always remained too short. This is because the rope is finite, whereas Krishna is infinite. The infinite cannot be tied by the finite. Finally, seeing His mother become tired with her efforts, He showed mercy and allowed Himself to be bound. This is an example of Maya.

Sri Krishna is a historical figure, but scholars hold different views regarding just how long ago He was actually born. However, it was at least 3500 years ago, and yet, His impact remains vibrant to this day.

Sri Ramakrishna observed that each incarnation of God (Avatar) manifests differently. For example, Sri Rama (Ramchandra) was not a one-hundred percent manifestation, while in Sri Krishna we see the fullest manifestation of the Lord. Sri Krishna's life had many different aspects, one of which is Maya, the topic of this discourse.

Maya is often discussed in the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna and in Vedanta philosophy. What is Sri Krishna's Maya like? In Chapter 7 Verse 14 (7:14) of the Bhagavad Gita we read:

"Daiiv̄ hy esā gunamayī
mama māyā duratyayā /
mām eva ye prapadyante
māyām etām taranti te" // 14

"My divine Maya (power)
constituted of the three Gunas
is difficult to overcome.
Whoever takes refuge in Me alone,
in utter devotion, overcomes it."

God's Maya is too complicated and difficult for most of us to comprehend and it is almost impossible for ordinary people to get rid of the influence of Maya. Maya is composed of three gunas, which are of both quality and substance. In 7:13 of the Gita we read:

"Tribhir guna-mayair bhāvair
ebhih sarvam idam jagat /
mohitam n'ābhijānāti
mām ebhyah param avyayam" // 13

"Deluded by the mental states
accruing from the three Gunas of Prakriti
this world knows not Me,
the Imperishable, transcending these Gunas."

The three Gunas are Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, which comprise Maya. What is Tamas? Tamas is always dull, motionless, a state of inertness, laziness, turning occasionally violent. Rajas is an egoistic, active, ambitious state characterised by endless desire. Sattva is purity, kindness, truth, universal love and non-selfishness. Under the influence of these three Gunas all created beings have been deluded. In addition, everyone is bound by the three of Gunas. How are they bound? We read from the Gita again in 14:5~8:

"Sattvam rajas tama iti
gunāh prakriti-sambhavāh /
nibadhnanti mahā-bājo
dehe dehinam avyayam" // 5

"The three Gunas as Sattva,
Rajas and Tamas born of Prakriti,
bind down the immortal soul
to the body in its embodied state."

"Tatra sattvam nirmalatvāt
prakāśakam anāmayam /
sukha-sangena badhnāti
jñāna-sañgena c'ānagha" // 6

"Among these, Sattva is luminous and
harmonious due to its essential purity.
It binds the soul, O sinless one (Arjuna),
with the feeling, 'I am happy. I am full of
knowledge.' "

"Rajo rāg 'ātmakam viddhi
trsnā-sanga-samudbhavam /
tan nibadhnā Kaunteya
karma-sangena dehinam" // 7

"Know Rajas to be passion-based,
and productive of longings
for unobtained objects and attachment for
those in one's possession.
It binds the (actionless) soul,
O son of Kunti (Arjuna),
by entangling it in action through the feeling,
'I am the doer.' "

"Tamas tu ajñāna-jam viddhi
mohanam sarva-dehinām /
pramād'ālasya-nidrābhis
tan nibadhnāti Bhārata" // 8

"As for the Guna known as Tamas,
it is ignorance-born and is productive of
delusion in all beings. It binds the soul,
O scion of the Bhārata clan (Arjuna), with the
obsession of a disposition characterised by
negligence, indolence and sleepiness."

(con't page 3)



All Sing Songs on Sri Krishna

Sri Krishna's Maya (from page 2)

The above quoted verses illustrate how all these Gunas bind, and hence, turn to be chains of the everfree Atman: Tamas by inertia; Rajas by endless words to satisfy desires; and Sattva by a state of happiness. Under the influence of these three Gunas we remain deluded.

Even the state of happiness and peace enjoyed by Sattvic people is not the highest state. After doing a lot of spiritual practice spiritual seekers can reach a very high level of spirituality and get into a Sattvic state, which however, is not the ultimate goal. In the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, a kind of obstacle to enlightenment is one in which a spiritual seeker gets into a sattvic state experiencing enormous joy and peace, then starts to think that they have attained the highest illumination, which is not true.

In fact, we need to transcend all three of the Gunas for enlightenment which is hinted at in the following verse from the Gita 14:20:

“Gunān etān trīn
dehī deha-samudbhavān /
janma-mṛtyu-jarā-dukhair
vimukto'mrtam aśnute” // 20

“The embodied spirit (Jīva),
having transcended the Gunas from which the
body has sprung,
gains deliverance from the miseries of birth,
death and old age,
and attains to Immortality”

In Chapter 10 of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna there is a parable of three robbers comparing the three Gunas. Three robbers came across a rich man walking in the forest and stole all his belongings. One of them said, “Kill this man,”

and another said “We should rather tie him up with a rope than kill him.” So the three tied him up and left him. A while later the third one came back and said to the rich man, “You had a hard time.” He untied him and led him out of the forest showing him the way back home. The rich man said, “Please come with me. I want to feed you at home.” The robber replied, “No I cannot. If I come with you to your home, I would be caught and imprisoned by the police.”

This parable teaches that Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are all robbers—robbing us of our pure spiritual nature. Some robbers are nice and kind. The first one who said kill him is Tamasic and Tamas tries to make us dull. The second one who said they better tie him up is Rajasic and Rajas tries to tie our soul with desire and attachment and keep us ignorant. The last one was Sattvic and Sattva tries to lead us to a pure state, but it is not the final state we should aim at. Being in happiness is being in the Sattvic state, but if we do not transcend that state we may fall to the Rajasic and Tamasic states. For instance, if our spiritual level rises after a lot of spiritual practice and, yet, we do not reach the level of enlightenment, we may fall again to Rajasic and Tamasic levels. In fact, we can see many examples of this in the lives or spiritual aspects depicted in the Puranic literature of India.

Interestingly, Sri Ramakrishna divided Maya into two categories: Avidya Maya and Vidya Maya. Rajas and Tamas fall within Avidya Maya and Sattva into Vidya Maya. Firstly, Avidya Maya has to be removed with the help of Vidya Maya, which means we need to practise a Sattvic nature to get rid of Rajasic and Tamasic natures. However, finally Vidya Maya also has to be removed, as it is also a chain to the soul.

(con't page 4)

• Thought of the Month •

“You pray in your distress
and in your need;
would that you might also pray
in the fullness of your joy
and in your days of abundance.”

- Khalil Gibran



Sri Krishna's Maya (from page 3)

Figuratively, the chains of Tamas are of iron, the chains of Rajas are made of silver, while Sattva's chains are made of gold. The chains of Sattva may be made of gold, yet they are chains nonetheless, and do not allow us to become free.

Sri Ramakrishna explains this point by an example of thorns. If we get a thorn stuck in our skin, we get it out by using the tip of another thorn, then throw them both away. We will not preserve the second thorn once it has helped pull the first one. Likewise, we will pull out the Rajasic and Tamasic thorns we have in us with the Sattvic thorn, then throw them all away, including the Sattvic thorn.

There is a story of Sri Krishna teaching Narada about Maya, as Narada asked Him to explain about it. Krishna did not, however, give any immediate reply. One day when the two were walking Krishna said, "I am very thirsty, Narada. Can you bring Me some water." So Narada went to a house in the countryside and asked for some water. Hearing his voice, a very beautiful young girl came out from inside the house. On seeing her, he fell hopelessly in love and completely forgot that he had gone to get water for Sri Krishna. Afterward Narada visited the house of the girl repeatedly and said to her father, "I want to marry your daughter." He was granted permission by her parents and married her. He lived there and had three children over time. One day there was a flood which washed away his house. He and his family were all in the rushing water holding hands tightly in a line. The current was so strong, however, that each family member was washed away one after the other. One child, the next one, the last one, then his wife. The loss being unbearable Narada

da began crying out loud. Suddenly a gentle voice came from out of nowhere. "Narada, Narada, where is my water?" When Narada looked around there was no water, no house, no family, nothing but Sri Krishna. That was how Krishna demonstrated what Maya is and how tremendous is Her power to delude.

If a great sage such as Narada can become such a victim of Maya, we can easily imagine how great is Maya's power to enchant. In fact, we are all deluded by Maya and suffer at all times. But in the final analysis Maya is our compassionate Mother who wants to engender in us the motivation for liberation by creating such situations in which we suffer, which finally teach us the fleeting nature of the world and its pleasures.

There is a parable of Narada being asked by Rama to make a wish so He could grant it. Narada said, "The world is deluded by Your Maya. Please protect me from the delusion." That is what we have to pray for. Jesus prayed in a similar way. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." We have to pray, as it is difficult for us alone to protect ourselves from the influence of Maya.

Practising purity is important, and yet, praying to God that He would protect us from His Maya is needed for liberation, too. We, firstly, have to remove Avidya Maya by Vidya Maya and eventually need to transcend Vidya Maya as well.

A while earlier we read from Bhagavatam, wherein trying to remove some soil He had eaten Yashoda saw the entire universe inside Sri Krishna's mouth. At that moment she understood His true nature was God. At the next moment, however, His Maya made her forget His true nature. If a devotee remembers He is actually God or Brahman at all times, Krishna cannot play His divine sport with the devotee. God likes playing, and therefore, shows His real nature one moment and hides it the next moment.

As we read from 7:14 of Gita, if we understand God's true nature and depend on Him, we can get rid of Maya. Otherwise, we will always be in the state of delusion under the influence of both Vidya Maya and Avidya Maya. This is what Sri Krishna teaches us in the Bhagavad Gita. •

November Yamagata Satsanga 2015 Summary contributed by Mr. Takahashi

On Saturday, November 21, 2015 from 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm about 45 people gathered at Yugakukan in Yamagata City to hear a discourse on “Good Human Relationships” by Swami Medhasananda, visiting from the Vedanta Society of Japan in Zushi, Kanagawa Prefecture.

The Satsanga was organised by Mr Takahashi of Ningen Kojo Kenkyujo (literally translated as Human Improvement Institute) aka Iyashino Yoga or Therapeutic Yoga.

The discourse is summarised by Mr Takahashi as follows:

1. Live an unselfish life
2. Love and respect each other
3. Self-sacrifice (serving others) is important
4. Take less and give more
5. Control anger. Anger arises from the ego. If we get angry, the other person does too. Anger deteriorates human relations and is not good for one's well being. How can we control anger?
 - a. When we feel anger we should not show it but hold it for, say, five minutes.
 - b. Forgive someone you are angry with and forget something you got angry about.
6. Avoid fault-finding. Flies like dirt, while honey bees like flowers. Therefore, do not see faults and drawbacks of others like flies, but look to their good points. If we want to be happy, we should see our own faults not others'. Others are all your relatives and this world is our very own.
7. Help and serve those who are in need. Also, look after animals and plants to practice an all encompassing compassion.

Pictures from the Christmas Eve Programme - Worship / Bible Reading / Carols



Vedanta Society Schedule of Events

January 2016

1st (Tue)

New Year's Kalpataru

11:30 New Year's Greeting → 14:00 Vedanta Kyokai → Buddha in Kamakura →
Catholic Yukinoshita Church → Shinto Shrine 'Tsurugaoka Hachimangu'
Please Contact: Kyokai (045-873-0428)

3rd (Sun)

Nara Narayan: Service to homeless Narayan

Please Contact: Yoko Sato (090-6544-9304)

9th (Sat)

Discourse on Bhagavad Gita

At the Embassy of India in Tokyo
(in Japanese only) (from 14:00-16:00)
Please Contact: Kyokai (045-873-0428)

10th, 24th, 31th (Sun)

Yoga-Asana Class

Zushi Annexe (14:00-15:30)
Please Contact: Hanari 080-6702-2308

12th, 26th (Tue)

Study class at Zushi

At the Zushi Centre
(from 10:00 ~ 12:30)

17th (Sun)

Sri Sri Sarada Devi Birthday Celebration

Zushi Annexe (10:30-16:30)
6:30 ~ 7:30 Mangala Arati
10:30 Puja, Pushpanjali
12:30 Prasad
14:45 Reading, Discourse, Music programme
16:30 Tea

23rd (Sat)

Discourses in Osaka

(Japanese language only)
Discourses on "Bhagavad Gita" and "Upanishad"
are given in Osaka on a monthly basis.

More details are available at:

<http://www.vedantajp.com/スケジュール/特別プログラム/>

30th (Sat)

Discourse at Shukutoku University

*Please Note: Discourses and discussions, apart from the Monthly Zushi Retreat,
are now conducted in the Japanese Language.*

• A Story to Remember •

Spirituality Means Waking Up

Spirituality means waking up. Most people, even though they don't know it, are asleep. They're born asleep, they live asleep, they marry in their sleep, they breed children in their sleep, they die in their sleep without ever waking up. They never understand the loveliness and the beauty of this thing that we call human existence. You know, all mystics -Catholic, Christian, non-Christian, no matter what their theology, no matter what their religion -- are unanimous on one thing: that all is well, all is well. Though everything is a mess, all is well. Strange paradox, to be sure. But, tragically, most people never get to see that all is well because they are asleep. They are having a nightmare.

Last year on Spanish television I heard a story about this gentleman who knocks on his son's door. "Jaime," he says, "wake up!" Jaime answers, "I don't want to get up, Papa." The father shouts, "Get up, you have to go to school." Jaime says, "I don't want to go to school." "Why not?" asks the father. "Three reasons," says Jaime. "First, because it's so dull; second, the kids tease me; and third, I hate school." And the father says, "Well, I am going to give you three reasons why you must go to school. First, because it is your duty; second, because you are forty-five years old, and third, because you are the headmaster." Wake up, wake up! You've grown up. You're too big to be asleep. Wake up! Stop playing with your toys.

Most people tell you they want to get out of kindergarten, but don't believe them. Don't believe them! All they want you to do is to mend their broken toys. "Give me back my wife. Give me back my job. Give me back my money. Give me back my reputation, my success." This is what they want; they want their toys replaced. That's all. Even the best psychologist will tell you that, that people don't really want to be cured. What they want is relief; a cure is painful.

Waking up is unpleasant, you know. You are nice and comfortable in bed. It's irritating to be woken up. That's the reason the wise guru will not attempt to wake people up. I hope I'm going to be wise here and make no attempt whatsoever to wake you up if you are asleep. It is really none of my business, even though I say to you at times, "Wake up!" My business is to do my thing, to dance my dance. If you profit from it, fine; if you don't, too bad! As the Arabs say, "The nature of rain is the same, but it makes thorns grow in the marshes and flowers in the gardens."

- DeMello Spiritual Center Online

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