



NOVEMBER 2016 - Volume 14 Number 11

# The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

## DECEMBER Calendar

### Birthdays

**Swami Premananda**  
Saturday, December 19

**Christmas Eve**  
Thursday, December 24

**Sri Sri Ma Sarada Devi**  
Friday, January 1, 2017

### Kyokai Events

18th (Sun)  
**Monthly Zushi Retreat**  
From 11AM Discourse  
Lunch Prasad  
Afternoon Session  
All are welcome!

24th (Thur)  
**Christmas Eve**  
Zushi Centre 7~9PM  
Worship / Reading /  
Discourse / Carols /  
Light prasad dinner  
All are welcome!

1 January 2017  
**Annual Kalpataru  
New Year's Day Walk  
& Sri Sri Ma Sarada Devi  
Birthday**  
Prayer / Readings /  
Meditation / Lunch /  
Pilgrimage to Kamakura

**More event information  
is on page 6**

## ✧ Thus Spake ✧

*"You will gain everything if you but take refuge in the Master. Renunciation alone was his splendour. We take his name and eat and enjoy because He renounced all."*

- Sri Sarada Devi

*"Don't worry thinking, what shall we eat? Or what shall we drink or what shall we wear? For your heavenly Father knows that you need all of these things."*

- Jesus, the Christ

## September Zushi Retreat 2016

### Self-control

A talk by Swami Medhasananda

There are various applications of self-control. For those with diabetes, self-control means they must watch their diet and refrain from enjoying sweets. People who have withdrawn from their addiction to drugs or alcohol must practice self-control to prevent a relapse. Their challenge to remain free of substance abuse is that of self-control.

(con't page 2)

## In this Issue:

- |  |            |
|--|------------|
| • Thought of the Month   | ... page 4 |
| • Kali Puja 2016   | ... page 5 |
| • Full December Schedule   | ... page 6 |
| • Kali Puja Photos   | ... page 7 |
| • India Visit Photos   | ... page 8 |
| • A Story to Remember  | ... page 9 |
| • Thus Spake   | ... page 1 |
| • Monthly Calendar   | ... page 1 |
| • September Zushi Retreat 2016<br>A talk by Swami Medhasananda<br>"Self-control" | ... page 1 |

## **Self-control** (from page 1)

### **Morality**

Another aspect of self-control is morality. Most people do not think very deeply about morality and they practice little self-control. But if one wants to become a better person; wants to become a little purer at heart; one has to control provocations and temptations. What sort of provocations? When we get criticism we may get angry. There are many such provocations. Temptation is another; temptations regarding money, sensual pleasures, etc.

Our morality is in question when we tell a lie. Why do we lie? Sometimes we lie to protect ourselves. Unless we have self control it is difficult to practice the truth.

### **Becoming Spiritual**

What else is this self-control important for? If we want to become spiritual, we need deeper self-control. It is a good thing for a moral person to control one's conscious-mind, but if we want to become a spiritual person, we must control our subconscious-mind as well. This is challenging.

To become spiritual my heart must become pure. If my heart does not become pure, I cannot become spiritual. For this more preparation or spiritual practices are required, such as Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Raja Yoga. In Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, however, the main focus is meditation. The eight limbs of yoga are Yamas, Niyamas, Yoga Asanas, Prana Yama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. What is the stage just before Samadhi? Dhyana or meditation. Why don't we succeed to reach the spiritual goal in deep meditation? Because we skip the practice of the previous steps to meditation, namely Yama and Niyama, which involve self-control.

### **Yoga Practices**

Let us then consider Jnana Yoga. For a practitioner of Jnana Yoga it is necessary to control our body, mind and senses. We

need to renounce the desire for secular enjoyments; we need discrimination between the real and unreal, which, again, is not possible unless we practice self-control.

Then there is Bhakti Yoga. If we can succeed in directing our feelings and emotions to God, we can be blessed with enlightenment. But when we attempt this practice, we see that unless we try to control our negative or carnal emotions, we cannot practice Bhakti Yoga.

Hence, it is impossible to practice spirituality, of whatever faith it might be, without some sort of self-control or self-regulation. In Indian philosophy and Indian spirituality are systematic.

### **Lord Buddha's Teachings**

In Buddhism's Noble Eight-fold Path (Ashtanga Marga) we find reference to 'Right Speech' or Samyak Vak, or speaking only truth and not saying that which is hurtful to others.

Next is 'Right Conduct' or Samyak Karma or right action. For example, refrain from violence, stealing or indulging in secular pleasures.

Then there is 'Right Livelihood' or Samyak Ajiva. We must earn money to live, but the way we earn must be an ethical way.

Then is 'Right Effort' or Samyak Vyama. Do not think bad thoughts. Do not think thoughts of violence for it pollutes our heart. In addition to abstaining from bad actions, we must purify our hearts. Both inner and outer purification is necessary for self-control

### **Jesus Christ's Teachings**

In the Bible we find Jesus Christ's 'Sermon on the Mount' given to his disciples. This sermon contains various moral advices and instructions which are not possible without self-control. For example, regarding anger He instructs:

"But now I tell you: whoever is angry with

(con't page 3)

## Self-control (from page 2)

his brother will be brought to trial, whoever calls his brother 'You good-for-nothing!' will be brought before the Council, and whoever calls his brother a worthless fool will be in danger of going to the fire of hell. So if you are about to offer your gift to God at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, go at once and make peace with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift to God."

## Prophet Muhammad's Teachings

In the Koran Muhammad gives us such moral teachings as:

"Your smiling in the face of your brother is charity."

"The exercise of religious duties will not atone for the fault of an abusive tongue."

"A man cannot be Muslim till his heart and tongue are soft."

"It is unworthy of a Muslim to injure peoples' reputation."

"It is unworthy to abuse anyone."

"Whoever desires the world and its riches should do so in a lawful manner."

All these teachings can be put into practice only by control of the senses, e.g. speech, greed, etc.

## Sense and Mind Control

So we see in all these scriptures, they talk of self-control. So let's talk of self-control in a little more detail. Ordinarily speaking, the mind has two levels, one is conscious and the other is sub-conscious. Still there is another level, and that is super-consciousness.

For transcendental consciousness we must control the conscious and the sub-conscious mind. What is in the sub-conscious mind? There are many hidden desires, attachments, obsessions and imaginings. Then there are samskara (mental impressions and psychological imprints), our feelings, etc. In order to control the mind, we must be aware of the existence of all these things inside us and clean them up. Then, if we can control our mind, we can control our emotions and our senses. Conversely, if we can control our emotions and senses, we control our mind.

There are three types or states of mind. One is very restless and always on the move like a monkey. Another can concentrate sometimes, but sometimes it cannot for long. Then there is the controlled mind and

we can concentrate for a long time. Our challenge is to start by cleaning our mind, and for this Pantanjali's Yoga Sutra offers many practical suggestions. Let us begin with the practice of non-violence.

## Pantanjali's Yoga Sutras

How do we practice non-violence? We have to be free from anger and jealousy, because anger and jealousy are the root causes of violence. One more way to practice non-violence is in considering the food we eat. If we eat fish or meat we should only take what we need for food, but we must not hunt animals for sport. So we must give up game hunting. Once in India in the name of religion many animals were sacrificed, to which Lord Buddha strongly objected and it stopped for the most part.

We should be careful about our speech also as abusive words can hurt other people. So we should not use rude or abusive words.

One cause of depression is a reaction to extreme suppression. In some dire situations



(con't page 4)

## Self-control (from page 3)

we may need to let it out. But we should take care that in doing so we don't go too far, which needs self-control.

## Practicing Universal Love

How do we make our minds free from negative emotions? Pantanjali's Yoga Sutra suggests one should cultivate the opposite emotion. That is, the emotion of hatred should be eliminated by cultivating the emotion of pure love or universal love; selfishness should be counteracted by the cultivation of unselfishness.

Let us now listen to a prayer based on universal love:

Om, Sarve bhavantu sukhinah  
Sarve santu nirāmayāḥ  
Sarve bhadraṇi paśyantu  
Mā kashchit duḥkha bhāgbhavet  
Om Shāntiḥ, Shāntiḥ, Shāntiḥ

May all be prosperous and happy  
May all be free from illness  
May all see what is spiritually uplifting  
May no one suffer  
Om peace, peace, peace

At the Ramakrishna Mission during initiations new initiates are advised; "Do not pray only for yourself, but pray for everyone." This type of prayer is important and efficacious. It is how one can practice universal love, as a result of which our mind will be broadened.

## Serving Others

After the recent earthquake in Kumamoto, I went to visit some devotees there and I asked the gathering about their personal experiences regarding the quake. One woman said that until that earthquake she was almost always thinking about herself and her family. The earthquake affected so many and she found that affected people were helping each other so she must also help others, and she did and said it was her first experience in doing so.

Swami Vivekananda offered a precious piece of advice. He said if you want happiness do not think about yourself, think of others, that is the certain path to happiness. So as much as possible, think of others and do not dwell on yourself. The reason we are full of worry and anxiety is because we only think of ourselves. The more and more you think of others, the more and more we can get peace. The more and more we only think of ourselves, the more and more peacelessness we will experience.

There are various other levels too at which we may offer help or service to others. One level is with words. We can offer encouragement to people in need. We can also try to maintain a smiling face. A smiling face itself is an act of charity. So keep a smiling face and use sweet words. It costs no money! This, too, is the practice of universal love.

Then there is physical care of those in need. Some of our devotees offer service to the homeless people regularly. They do so without any thought of getting something in return. Then there is caring for the Society's garden. This is Karma Yoga. The people preparing our lunch prasada are also practicing selfless service which is the central idea of Karma Yoga. We can also offer our brain power or technical knowledge to assist others without any expectation in return.

## In Summary

So to control our mind and senses we should begin with trying to control our anger, our jealousy, our ill-feelings and we should practice universal love.

Self-control includes not stealing too. Of  
(con't page 5)

### • Thought of the Month •

"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase."

- Martin Luther King, Jr.



## Self-control (from page 4)

course we do not steal things from others, but stealing has a deeper meaning. Typical daily working hours in offices are six to seven hours and sometimes we start late or finish early; although that does not seem common among the Japanese. What's more, some people check personal email now and then during their working hours and do not feel bad. However, those hours are supposed to be used for work for which one gets a salary. Although stealing time is not stealing things, yet it is a sort of theft.

I have given some hints on self-control and would like you to think more yourselves and practice it as much as possible, which will definitely benefit you and elevate you both as a person and as a spiritual seeker.

Let me conclude this discourse with a suitable quotation from Swami Vivekananda's talk on karma and its effect on character:

"... Self-restraint is a manifestation of greater power than all outgoing action. A carriage with four horses may rush down a hill unrestrained, or the coachman may curb



the horses. Which is the greater manifestation of power? A cannon-ball flying through the air goes a long distance and falls. Another is cut short in its flight by striking a wall, and the impact generates intense heat. All outgoing energy following a selfish motive is frittered away; it will not cause power to return to you; but if restrained, it will result in development of power. This self-control will tend to produce a mighty will, a character which makes a Christ or a Buddha."

Thank you.



## Japan Vedanta Society Celebrates Kali Puja 2016

From 7PM on Saturday evening October 29, the Vedanta Society of Japan (Nippon Vedanta Kyokai) observed Sri Sri Kali Puja in their new Annexe building adjacent to its main Zushi Centre.

About 160 people attended the Puja conducted by Swami Medhasananda (Maharaj) and participated in the pushpanjali (flower offering). Soon the arrangements were made and Maharaj conducted the Homa (fire ritual) with the entire congregation joining in prescribed chanting. Afterward everyone lined up to receive a dab of sacred ash (Vibhuti) on the forehead from Maharaj and offer salutations to Kali Ma.

From 9PM everyone was encouraged to partake in a light Prasad dinner in the main Ashrama building. •  
*(More Kali Puja photos on page 7.)*

• Vedanta Society of Japan •  
**DECEMBER SCHEDULE of EVENTS 2016**

3rd (Sat)

**Discourse on Bhagavad Gita At the Embassy of India in Tokyo**

(in Japanese only) (from 14:15- 16:00)

Link : <http://www.gita-embassy.com/お問合せ/>

4th, 11th, 18th (Sun)

**Yoga-Asana Class**

At the Zushi Annexe (from 14:00-15:30)

Please contact : Hanari 080-6702-2308 Link : <http://zushi-hatayoga.jimdo.com/>

4th (Sun)

**Satsanga in Padma Yoga**

Please Contact: Hirano 03-6416-0031

13th (Tue)

**Gospel Class**

At the Zushi Centre (14:00~15:30 )

17th (Sat)

**Discourse on Upanishad At the Embassy of India in Tokyo**

(in Japanese only) (from 14:15 – 16:00)

Link : <http://www.gita-embassy.com/お問合せ/>

18th (Sun)

**Monthly Retreat at Zushi**

Zushi Centre (from 10:30-16:30)

Please contact if you plan to attend (046-873-0428)

24th (Thu)

**Christmas Eve Celebration**

At Zushi Centre (from 19:00pm-21:00pm)

Please Contact: 046-873-0428

Worship / Reading / Discourse / Carols / Light prasad dinner

All are welcome to attend!

The monthly (31st Sat)

**Nara Narayan: Service to Homeless Narayan**

is cancelled for the month of December due to scheduling conflicts.

1st January 2017 (Sunday)

**Annual Kalpataru and New Year's Day Observance**

From 11:30 at Zushi Centre

Prayer / Readings / Meditation / Lunch / Pilgrimage to Kamakura's  
Buddha Statue, Kuginoshita Catholic Church and Hachimangu Shrine

Please contact if you plan to attend (046-873-0428)





## Kali Puja Photos

(Story page 5)





Swami Medhasananda (Maharaj) visited India from September 26~ October 26.  
On September 30 and October 1, Maharaj visited Visva-Bharati University in Santiniketan, West Bengal and gave a talk to Japanese language study students.



Bazar



University Prayer Hall



University Classroom



University Prayer Hall



Outdoor Classroom



Group Photo



## • A Story to Remember •

### The Wooden Bowl

The old man's hands trembled, his eyesight was blurred and his step faltered.

The family ate together at the table, but increasingly the elderly grandfather's shaky hands and failing sight made eating difficult. Peas rolled off his spoon and onto the floor. When he grasped his glass, milk would spill onto the tablecloth.

His son and daughter-in-law gradually became irritated with the mess. "We must do something about father," said the son. "I've had enough of his spilled milk, noisy eating and food on the floor."

So the husband and wife set a small table in the corner. There, Grandfather ate alone while the rest of the family enjoyed dinner.

Since Grandfather had broken a dish or two, his food was served in a wooden bowl.

Sometimes when the family glanced in Grandfather's direction, they saw that he had a tear in his eye as he sat and ate alone.

Still, the only words the couple had for him were sharp admonitions when he dropped a fork or spilled some food.

The family's four-year-old had watched all this in silence. One evening before supper, the father noticed that his son was playing with scraps of wood on the floor.

He asked the child sweetly, "What are you making?"

Just as sweetly, the boy responded, "Oh, I am making a little bowl for you and Mama to eat your food in when I grow up."

The four-year-old smiled and went back to work.

- Islamic Information Net

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