



NOVEMBER 2017 - Volume 15 Number 11

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

DECEMBER 2017
Calendar

Birthdays

Sri Sri Ma Sarada Devi
Saturday, 9 December

Swami Shivananda
Wednesday, 13 December

Swami Saradananda
Sunday, 24 December

Christmas Eve
Sunday, 24 December

Kyokai Events

15th (Sun) 10:30am
**Zushi Monthly
Retreat**

**Sri Sri Sarada Devi
Birth Celebration**

10:30 Puja, Pushpanjali
(flower offering)

12:30 Prasad

14:45 Reading, Discourse,
Music Programme
16:30 Tea

24th (Sun)
**Christmas Eve
Celebration
Zushi Centre**

(from 19:00am-21:00pm)
Worship / Reading
/ Discourse / Carols
Light prasad dinner!
All are welcome!

**More Details on these &
other events on page 2.**



✧ Thus Spake ✧

"As wind removes the cloud, so the Name of God destroys the cloud of worldliness."

- Sri Sri Sarada Devi

"By practice of the Word, one, freed from desires, escapes from the wheel of transmigration and finally attains salvation."

- Guru Nanak

October Zushi Retreat 2017

Divine Mother

(Part Two)

A talk by Swami Medhasananda

[This is the conclusion of a two-part talk 'Divine Mother' given during the morning session of the Society's October Retreat at its Zushi Centre on Sunday, October 15th.]

The gods offered their pranams to Mahamaya just as we find in Chapter 11 of the Bhagavad Gita. Here Krishna reveals His universal, cosmic form to Arjuna, who becomes very terrified with the vastness of the Lord. Before this reveal Arjuna had thought of Krishna as his friend, though he was told and knew that Krishna was the Lord, he could not fathom the true nature of God. Only after seeing the cosmic form of Krishna did he become aware of the vastness and greatness of Krishna. Then Arjuna offered pranams and prayers to Sri Krishna again and again, from the front and back and from side to the other side.

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• Schedule of **Vedanta Society of Japan** Events •

December 2017

2nd (Sat)

Satsanga in Sapporo

Please Contact: Tanabe 080-1180-8121

9th (Sat)

Satsanga in Yamagata

Please Contact: Takahashi 023-645-3282

10th (Sun)

Satsanga in Sendai

Please Contact: Sato miyadevi@m6.gyao.ne.jp

12th (Tue) (14:00~15:30)

Gospel class At Zushi Centre

Please Contact: benkyo.nvk@gmail.com

16th (Sat) (10:00~12:00)

Discourse on Bhagavad Gita - Embassy of India in Tokyo

(In Japanese only) Bring photo ID for entry

<http://www.gita-embassy.com/お問合せ/>

17th (Sun) (from 10:30-16:30)

December Monthly Retreat

Sri Sri Sarada Devi Birthday Celebration at Zushi Centre Annexe

06:30 Mangala Arati

10:30 Puja, Pushpanjali (flower offering)

12:30 Prasad

14:45 Reading, Discourse, Music Programme

16:30 Tea

23rd (Sat) (from 10:00 – 12:00)

Discourse on Upanishad - At the Embassy of India in Tokyo

(in Japanese only - Bring photo ID)

<http://www.gita-embassy.com/お問合せ/>

24th (Sun) (from 19:00am-21:00pm)

Christmas Eve Celebration Zushi Centre

Please Contact: Kyokai 046-873-0428

Worship / Reading / Discourse / Carols

Light prasad dinner!

All are welcome!

Every Sunday (Sun) (from 14:00-15:30)

Yoga-asana class -Zushi Annexe

Please contact : Hanari 080-6702-2308

<<http://zushi-hatayoga.jimdo.com/>>

Nara Narayana→has been cancelled for December 2017

Divine Mother (from page 1)

In the Chandi we find:

O Mahamaya you are in the form of sleep in every person. We offer pranam to you.'

Again we read:

O' Mother, You are in the form of the appetite,
We offer pranam to You.
You are in the form of shadows,
We offer pranam to You.
You are in the form of Shakti (power),
We offer pranam to You.
You are in the form of thirst,
We offer pranam to You.
You are in the form of forgiveness,
We offer pranam to You.
You are in the form of different castes,
We offer pranam to You.
You are in the form of shame,
We offer pranam to You.

We should note here what is meant by shame. Sometimes a person may not do what is right because of what others may think of him; for example we know that meditation is good for us, but if we are concerned what a family member may think and do not meditate—this shame is not good. This does happen. Someone wants to do spiritual practice, but does not do so to avoid the ridicule of another. Even if we know that spiritual practice or visiting a temple is good for us, we are ashamed and do not do so. If you think it is good, you must do it. Do not be so concerned about what others may or may not think! The other type of shame comes from doing something wrong.



We continue to read in Chandi:

O' Mother, You are in the form of peace in every person,
We offer pranam to You.
O' Mother, You are in the form of respect for others,
We offer pranam to You.
O' Mother, You are in the form of beauty,
We offer pranam to You.
O' Mother, You are in the form of wealth,
We offer pranam to You.

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Divine Mother (from page 3)

O' Mother,
You are in the form of different professions,
We offer pranam to You.
O' Mother, You are in the form of memory,
We offer pranam to You.
O' Mother, You are in the form of kindness
and compassion,
We offer pranam to You.
O' Mother, You are in the form of satisfaction,
We offer pranam to You.
O' Mother, You are in the form of mother in everyone,
We offer pranam to You.

Thought of the Month

"The notion that science and
spirituality are somehow
mutually exclusive,
does a disservice to both."

— Carl Sagan

I should point out here the author says 'the form of mother in everyone' – not only in women but in men too. This is because there are female characteristics in men and there are male characteristics in women. So that is why the hymn is true that in all beings there is the form of Mother.

Interestingly, it goes on:

O' Mother, You are in the form of mistakes in people,
We offer pranam to You.
O' Mother, You are in the form of all the senses,
We offer pranam to You.
O' Mother, You are all the elements,
We offer pranam to You.
O' Mother, You are Brahman,
We offer pranam to You.
O' Mother, You are Consciousness,
We offer pranam to You.

In this way we see that Mahamaya pervades everything in the same way that Brahman is all pervading. Brahman is eternal. Brahman is infinite. Mahamaya is regarded in the same way. This is how we should look upon Durga, Kali, Parvati in the same way. In fact, the real nature of Brahman and Mahamaya is the same, as both of them are Sat-Chit-Ananda though at the same time, Mahamaya is regarded as the divine power of Brahman. In our daily evening prayer here at our Centre we chant this litany to the Divine Mother from the Chandi:

om sarvamaṅgalamāṅgalye śive sarvārthasādhike |
śaraṇye tryambake gauri nārāyaṇi namo'stu te ||
sṛṣṭisthitivināśānām śaktibhūte sanātani |
guṇāśraye guṇamayā nārāyaṇi namo'stu te ||
śaraṇāgatadīnārtaparitrāṇaparāyaṇe |
sarvasyārtihare devi nārāyaṇi namo'stu te ||
jaya nārāyaṇi namo'stu te jaya nārāyaṇi namo'stu te |
jaya nārāyaṇi namo'stu te jaya nārāyaṇi namo'stu te ||

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Divine Mother (from page 6)

O Auspiciousness
of all things auspicious!
O consort of Shiva,
fulfiller of all our goals!
Our only refuge!
O three-eyed Gauri!
O Narayani!
Our salutations to you.
The power beyond all creation,
preservation, and destruction!
O eternal one!
O ground of the gunas
and embodiment of the gunas!
O Narayani!
Our salutations to you.
Ever devoted to the salvation of the lowly and suffering who seek shelter in you!
O destroyer of all misery! O Divine Mother! O Narayani! Our salutations to you.
All victory to you, O Narayani. Our salutations to you.
Victory and salutations to you again and again, O Narayani!



Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother of our Vedanta Society trinity is the manifestation of Mahamaya. She is the giver of all things auspicious and the fulfiller of goals. If we are ever in trouble, we may pray to Her piteously for support which will surely come.

The Root of Attachments

Now back to our story in the Chandi about King Suratha and Samadhi. After narrating and explaining the divine sport of Mahamaya, the sage Medhas of the forest Ashrama, in answer to the king's question, explained that all could be addressed by worship and prayer to Mahamaya. The two then went to the bank of a river and made an image of Mahamaya and began praying and worshiping and meditating upon Her. Their worship and prayers became so intense that they bled and offered this, too, to the Mother. After three years of such worship the Mother appeared and asked them what the goal or desire of their worship to Her was. The king then asked the Mother for the power that he may defeat all his enemies and become king again. The Vaishya, Samadhi, then asked for Her boon that he be freed from his attachments to I-ness and my-ness, which are the roots of all our attachments to our family, friends and our possessions, and the basis of this I-ness and my-ness is our body, senses, mind and intelligence. This does not include the pure consciousness of our being. This my-ness includes, my body, my house, my husband, my wife, my children, my education, etc., and thus becomes the root of all our attachments. So while the king asked for the power to defeat his enemies and become a supremely powerful king, this temporal power leaves the root of his attachments and sufferings to remain. The Vaishya, on the other hand, asked Mother to eliminate his attachments. This, the Chandi tells us, makes Samadhi the wiser of the two men. The Mother, however, granted both their wishes.

Now we have our choice of prayers. Should we make temporal prayers like King Samadhi or make spiritual prayers like Samadhi? If we are really wise, however, we shall pray to the Divine Mother like Samadhi, which leads us to eternal peace and bliss, and thus, our life will be fulfilled. •

A Pilgrimage to Southern India

Part I - Day 1 through Day 6

By Ms Miwako Tanabe

[Tanabe-san provides a summary of her detailed report to be completed in two parts.]

From the 13th of September to the end of the month, Swami Medhasananda (Maharaj) and eight devotees from the Vedanta Society of Japan visited South India and the Ramakrishna Math and Mission Headquarters, or Belur Math, near Kolkata on a pilgrimage trip of which I report.



Arrival Chennai Airport



RK Mission Chennai

Narita Airport to Chennai

The party departed Narita International Airport on an Air India flight before noon on September 13, and it was midnight when we arrived at Chennai International Airport connecting at Delhi. A pilgrimage bus tour of Akalanka of 13 nights started here. Mr. Dey and his wife, Sulaga, accompanying the entire schedule of South Indian pilgrimage sites, welcomed us at the airport and took us to the Ramakrishna Mission Chennai Branch, where the men of our party were accommodated, and a hotel near the Ashrama, where arrangements had been made for the women.

Chennai is the largest city in southern India facing the Bay of Bengal, the capital of Tamil Nadu State. According to Maharaj, the territories south of the Deccan Highlands were not much affected by the Islamic culture which swept across the north, so the indigenous Dravidian cultures of this area of India continued on here. We went to see many southern Indian temples which are of the traditional South Indian style of architecture.

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RK Mission Chennai

Mahabalipuram



Pilgrimage (from page 6)

Chennai Math and Mahabalipuram Ruins Tour

Blessed with fine weather on the 2nd day of our stay, we went for morning greetings to the temple of the Math, which was founded by Swami Ramakrishnananda (1863-1911), a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. The math has various facilities up and to the back of the fairly large campus. After breakfast Swami Vimurtanandaji, manager of the math, showed us

around. He told us there are 20 Swamis and 24 Brahmacharis staying at this monastery.

Afterwards we visited Mahabalipuram, a village some 60 kilometres south of Chennai. The temples and sculptures here are registered as World Heritage sites. We took a tour of "Sea Shore Temple" (the weathered coastal temple of stone built on the beachfront), "Arjuna's Penance" (the famous world's largest relief sculpture), "Five Rathas" (five stone-carved temples the prototypes of Hindu temples).

Temple of Kanchipuram and Ramakrishna Math, Kanchipuram



Mahabalipuram

Kamakashi Temple



On our 3rd morning we completed morning prayers at Chennai Math, and after breakfast we immediately left for Kanchipuram. This city is located about 80 kilometres southwest of Chennai and is one of the Seven Great Hindu Holy Places. Because the temples of south India respect and observe traditions, the women were instructed to wear a scarf around their head and men to wear a "dhoti" to enter and worship.

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Pilgrimage (from page 7)

At first we worshiped at “Vharatrajan Perumal Temple” which has about a 60-meter spire called Gopuram. Next was the Kamakshi Amman Temple which is dedicated to the Goddess Kamakshi (an incarnation of Parvati), we meditated in a corner of the hall and sang the goddess’s hymn “Sarva Mangala Mangalye.”

Afterward we visited the Ramakrishna Math’s Kanchipuram Branch. Saying that there is also a Math at Kanchipuram, Maharaj hurriedly made a call from the bus. Despite being a impromptu visit, compounded with a late arrival time of 2:30 p.m., the swamis were waiting for us to

have lunch together. We were all very appreciative of the opportunity their selfless affection gave us.



St. Thome



Chennai Sightseeing, Vivekananda House, RK Mission Students' Home

Two swamis and a brahmachari accompanied us on the 4th day. First we worshiped at the Kapaleeswar Temple, the biggest Shiva temple in Chennai, then visited the San Thome Basilica over the Tomb of Saint Thomas. After Jesus' death, his disciple, St.

Thomas, came to India from Jerusalem through Syria and Pakistan where, according to legend, he preached and was later martyred. In the explanation by Maharaj, although Swami Ramakrishnanandaji was a Hindu monk, he prayed at this sanctuary.

We then visited Vivekananda House on Marina Beach, which is famous for its long beautiful coastline. In 1897, Swamiji, who returned to the Madras (now Chennai) port from the West with his great achievements there, stayed for nine days at this building, once called the Ice House. During his stay Swamiji gave some public lectures and sowed spiritual seeds in South India. After that, Swami Ra-

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Pilgrimage (from page 8)

makrishnanandaji came here and established the Ramakrishna Mission Centre. In Kolkata, at the early Baranagar and then the Alambazar monasteries, Ramakrishnanandaji had worshiped the master's remains like a guard and never left the remains for even a single night. He served Master's remains as living entity with immutable faith and affection. Even though it meant departing from the remains he had served for 11 years, he solemnly accepted Swamiji's request: "You are to go to Madras and found a monastery there in the name of our beloved Master".



I admire Ramakrishnanandaji's deep faith and compassion, seeing Master in everyone. Nevertheless, my heart clenches when I imagine his feelings at leaving behind the remains of his beloved Master. I wish I could make such a choice without any hesitation or pain like Ramakrishnanandaji.

From 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. we had a social gathering with the devotees of Chennai Math. We were moved to witness the deep love Maharaj has for the devotees in Japan and the deep faith of the devotees of Chennai. For the evening Arati we dedicated three Japanese devotional songs and 'Ramakrishna Sharanan'.

After that we visited the Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home. This is precisely 'Home' for orphans and poor children. In 1917 Swami Brahmanandaji laid the foundation stone and the building opened in 1921. According to the principal of Home, there were only five students at first, but now are some 700 students. Home follows the traditional 'Guru Kula', in which students live with teachers and monks, with the aim to form the student's total personality. Classes on morality and religion give them basic teachings on 'eternal values', and by sharing various labor, they will become 'Men of Independence'.

Emphasising labor is a distinctive feature of Home; where students are divided into groups and rotate labours such as cleaning or shopping, ultimately coming to learn everything necessary for daily life. In this way, children who do not have parents learn how to adapt to society, and they learn to see that any work is dignified and needed from childhood. This experimental way of 'harmonised development of the body, mind and heart' has received world attention and some charity groups have started similar pro-



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Pilgrimage (from page 9)

grammes.

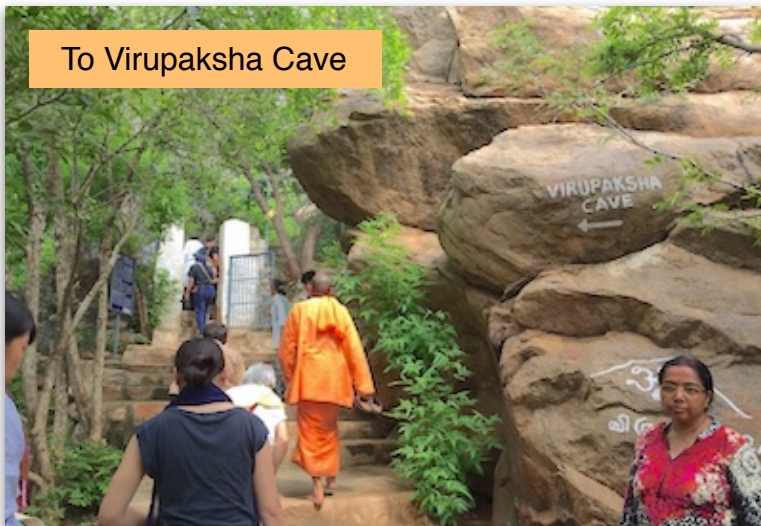
Ramanashram of Tirvannamalai

On the 5th day we departed Chennai at 6:30 a.m., we were heading for Ramana Maharshi's Ashram (Ramanashram) at Tirvannamalai about 200 kilometres away. We arrived at Ramanashram before noon and unexpectedly for me the ashram was in town, but I found it had a relaxing and peaceful atmosphere. The guesthouse is a

few minutes walk from the ashram. In Maharaj's room we listened to stories about the great saint Ramana Maharshi. In the evening, we're guided through the ashram and had a long meditation in the Meditation Hall where the Maharshi slept and received visitors for 27 years.



Ramanashram



To Virupaksha Cave

To Mount Arunachala

On the 6th day we went up to the two sacred locations on Mt. Arunachala, behind the ashram where the young Maharshi had practiced his spiritual goal. First we arrived at a place called Skandashram where Maharshi had dwelled and spent his days in meditation and a silent life among devotees. Maharshi had been there for

seven years from 1915, before current ashram evolved. There we meditated for a while. The other holy place where Maharshi had stayed before Skandashram is Virupaksha Cave. We meditated at the back of the small cave and did 'Om' chanting near the entrance.

After lunch at Ramanashram, three of the tour participants, including me, requested Maharaj to arrange for us to conduct a Giri Pradakshina (circumambulation Mt. Arunachala as taught by Maharshi). In doing so, it is said that all sins can be taken away; hope can be fulfilled; and one can be freed from rebirth with the wisdom of Jnana. With arrangements

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Cave Entrance

Pilgrimage (from page 10)

made by Maharaj, a devotee named 'Shribaba' took us on a Giri Pradakshina. We learned that Shribaba goes out every day to do Giri Pradakshina. Though Shribaba gave us minimal instructions, I felt I could concentrate with confidence and, actually, I was able to continue chanting the mantra for the entire three hours of fast walking. This was a very pleasing experience for me.



Sri Aurobindo Ashram

Sri Aurobindo Ashram of Pondicherry

We left the Ramanasrama guest-house at 6 o'clock of the 6th day and arrived at Pondicherry, a city along the Bengal Bay that was once a French territory, at around 9 o'clock. Maharaj explained to us about Sri Aurobindo and Mirra Richard, his closest disciple known to followers as 'The Mother'. Aurobindo was acquainted with Sister Nivedita. The Mother later became the spiritual leader of Aurobindo's followers after his death.

Inside the Sri Aurobindo Ashram there is a white marble stonework with many flower offerings in the courtyard. Sri Aurobindo and Mother are buried side by side where we prayed for a while and then took lunch in the ashrama dining hall. In the afternoon we went shopping at stores operated by the ashram, then checked in to the guesthouse by the sea. In the evening we visited Mr. and Mrs. Dey's house where they were preparing a homemade dinner for Maharaj and us. After Puja and evening Arati on the second floor, we enjoyed our Bengali-type dinner. We then gave the couple some gifts of thanks we had brought from Japan. I didn't know how to say the words, but just saying 'thank you' in English, Mrs. Dey said with a smile, "There is no need for you to thank me."

We returned to the guest house after 10 o'clock.

(Part II is scheduled to continue in the December issue of The Vedanta Kyokai)



From Rameshwaram (next time)

• A Story to Remember •

The Fortune Teller

Long time ago there lived a man who was admired and renowned for his ability to read future events in the stars. He spent every night gazing and studying the sky, while his days were full of worry about the advice that would best benefit the villagers who often came to him hoping to know what fortunes their tomorrows held.

One evening he was walking along the open road outside the village. He fixed his eyes on the stars, and he thought he saw an impending danger was near. Lost in his thoughts and calculations as he looked at the stars, he kept walking without paying attention to the path ahead. Suddenly, he fell into a deep ditch full of mud and water.

The ditch was so deep that he began sinking into the thick muddy sludge, clawing desperately at the slippery banks of the hole in an effort to climb out. Unable to get a firm grip and crawl out, he began to fear for his life. He started calling piteously for someone to help and his cries for help soon brought the villagers running.

As they pulled him out of the mud to safety, one of them remarked, "Sir, you read our future in the stars, and yet you failed to see the danger at your own feet! May this be a lesson to us all to pay more attention to what is right in front of us each moment, and let the future take care of itself."

Moral: We all want to live bright and happy lives, but time is continuous and doesn't stop for anyone. Each tomorrow becomes today and what we think and do in our present makes our future. We can look forward to our tomorrows and improve upon them, but we can't turn back the clock to a time that has passed. So we must maintain balance in our daily life, while we work with purpose in the present to create better tomorrows for ourselves and those around us.

From - Moral Stories (dot) org

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