



December 2018 - Volume 16 Number 12

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

Happy New Year

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

January 2019
Calendar

Birthdays

**Swami
Shivanandaji**
Tuesday, 1 Jan

**Swami
Saradanandaji**
Saturday, 12 Jan

**Swami
Turianandaji**
Sunday, 20 Jan

Sri Sri Swamiji
Swami Vivekananda
Sunday, 27 Jan

Zushi Events

1st Tues(January 2019)
New Year's Kalpataru

11:30~14:00

New Year's Greeting
Zushi Centre
Walk to Kamakura Dai
Butsu, Catholic Church
and Shinto Shrine!

20th (Sun)

**Zushi Retreat
Sri Sarada Devi
Birth Celebration**

Mangala Arati
Puja, Pushpanjali
Lunch Prasad
Discourse/Music
All are Welcome!

See Page 2 for details of
these and other events!

✧ Thus Spake ✧

"Who is whose Guru? God alone is the guide and Guru of the universe."

- Sri Ramakrishna

"And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time."

- Jesus Christ

September Zushi Retreat

"Sri Krishna: incarnation of God" - Part 2

A talk by Swami Medhasananda

[This concludes Swami's talk presented in the November issue]

Krishna's Most Unique Characteristic

There is another distinctive characteristic. According to Vaishnava scriptures, there are five attitudes devotees can take towards God (bhava). The first one is the 'shanta' or the calm, peaceful attitude. In ancient times most sages took this attitude towards God.

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VEDANTA SOCIETY of JAPAN SCHEDULE of EVENTS
JANUARY 2019

1st (Tue)

New Year's Kalpataru

11:30 ~ 14:00

New Year's Greeting Zushi Centre

→ Buddha in Kamakura

→ Catholic Yukinoshita Church

→ Shinto Shrine 'Tsurugaoka Hachimangu'

Please Contact: Kyokai (045-873-0428)

3rd (Thu)

Nara Narayan: Service to homeless Narayan

Contact Sato: urara5599(at mark)gmail(dot)com

5th (Sat)

Discourse on Bhagavad Gita - Embassy of India in Tokyo

(in Japanese only) (10:00~12:00)

Please Contact: Kyokai (045-873-0428)

6th (Sun)

Half Day Retreat at Zushi 14:00~16:00

Chanting, Readings on Spiritual Life,

Discussion, Meditation, Tea and Snacks

Please Contact: benkyo(dot)nvk(at-mark)gmail(dot)com

12th (Sat)

Discourse on Upanishad - At the Embassy of India in Tokyo

(in Japanese only) (10:00~12:00)

<http://www.gita-embassy.com/>

15th (Tue)

Gospel Class Zushi Centre

(14:00~16:30)

benkyo(dot)nvk(at-mark)gmail(dot)com

20th (Sun)

Sri Sri Sarada Devi Birthday Celebration

At the Zushi Annexe (11:00-16:30)

6:30~7:30 Mangala Arati

11:00 Puja, Pushpanjali (flower offering)

12:30 Prasad

14:45 Reading, Discourse, Music program

16:30 Tea

26th (Sat)

Discourses in Osaka

Discourses on "Bhagavad Gita" and "Upanishad" are given in Osaka on a monthly basis.

Every Saturday

Yoga-Asana Class

At the Zushi Annexe (10:45-11:45)

Please Contact: Hanari 080-6702-2308 (羽成淳 <<http://zushi-hatayoga.jimdo.com>>)

Sri Krishna (Part 2) (from page 1)

Next is the attitude of ‘dasya’ or servant. In this concept a devotee thinks of God as their master and of themselves as a faithful servant. A very famous example of this is Hanuman towards Rama. Swami Vivekananda (Swamiji) considered himself a servant to Sri Ramakrishna, too, and made a hymn called ‘Ramakrishna-dāsā-vayam’ based on this attitude.

Then there is the attitude of friendship or ‘sakhya’, where a devotee regards God as a close friend. Here there is the example of Sri Krishna’s cowherd friends in Vrindavan. They cared so much about Krishna as a friend that when they wanted to give Krishna a fruit, they even ate a portion of it to check if it was sweet enough beforehand. Usually, we never have a bite of the food we intend to offer to God before we offer it to Him. Doing so could be considered committing a sacrilege, but a friend would not mind it at all in their eagerness to share the sweetest food.

In the ‘shanta’ relationship some respectable distance is maintained between the devotee and God. Although in ‘dasya’ the relationship becomes closer and a devotee has love for Him, in the sakhya attitude God is considered much closer to a devotee.

Next is the ‘vatsalya’ attitude of looking upon God as one’s child. Especially, as a mother of God the devotee thinks she is superior to Him, otherwise she cannot take care of Him. In this relationship God is even closer to the devotee and is dependent upon her.

And finally comes the ‘madhura’ or attitude of a sweetheart to God. This is completely different from the ordinary love relationship between a man and a woman, and difficult for ordinary devotees to comprehend it. This relationship does not include even a fraction of body consciousness. If the devotee does not understand this point very well and practices anyway, it causes his downfall. However, in the scriptures this is regarded as the highest of all the attitudes to God. The reason for this is that the madhura includes all aspects of the other four relationships with God.

By having an image of Krishna in mind, a devotee can take any of these five ideal attitudes towards God. In the shanta attitude we can think of God as our father. In the dasya relationship we can think, “Sri Krishna is my master and I am his servant”. In the sakhya attitude we can regard Krishna as our closest friend. The vatsalya attitude is still practiced by some devotees when they look upon Krishna as their baby and tend to the image of Krishna with the utmost love and care. There are very few cases of the madhura practice though it is possible, such as in the case of the wife and husband relationship. Sri Ramakrishna said that if a wife takes the madhura attitude towards her husband that it would pose no danger, but rather elevate the relationship. So, we can take any of these five attitudes towards Sri Krishna. Hence, Krishna’s most unique characteristic is that He manifests himself as the ideal of all the aforementioned attitudes towards God which a devotee can hold.

Krishna’s Divine Play

I will now discuss another aspect of Sri Krishna: his divine play. There are many interesting instances of his divine play. Each of them has some significance and demonstrates his divine nature.

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Sri Krishna (Part 2) (from page 3)

As a baby he was very mischievous and, although he was raised by wealthy parents Nanda and Yashoda, he once ate dirt. When Yashoda saw that, she was upset and tried to forcefully open his mouth to take the dirt out. Then she saw the whole universe in his mouth—where she saw Nanda, herself, Vrindavan, everything. She felt scared and closed it, when Baby Krishna returned to the normal state as a baby.

Thought of the Month

"No one has ever become poor
by giving."

- Anne Frank

Like this, there are many other interesting stories too. You can see some of these stories in the Bhagavatam published by our Society. However, if you read Vedanta Society books or any sourced book on Krishna, please remember that his play is more than narratives of supernatural powers—his play offers a multitude of unique examples of divine significance.

Two Key Practices

Now let us discuss the most important teachings of Sri Krishna. Firstly, 'fulfil your duty without attachment'. The householder's duty includes responsibilities to one's wife, husband, children, parents and so on. Whatever be the duty, just carry it out with no attachment to it. What is the problem of being attached? It is that the results bind us, whether they are good or bad, or whether they are a success or failure. Each result adds another link to the chain that binds our soul.

Everyone wants freedom in matters of movement, work, opinion, faith, etc., and the ultimate goal of such freedom is liberation. To achieve liberation however, we need to do our work, and do so without attachment. If we have attachment to our work while doing it, our mind becomes susceptible to peacelessness and restlessness. When we succeed we feel very happy and when we fail we feel sad, thus continuously swinging between happi-

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Sri Krishna (Part 2) (from page 4

ness and and sadness and there is no steadiness of mind—without which there cannot be any peace and tranquility. If we continue our attachment to work we cannot attain freedom. In the Bhagavad Gita Krishna states how to feel free by offering the results of our actions to the Lord saying, “In your mind, offer all the results of your work to Me.” Krishna also says, “Remember me at all times.”

So, these are two pieces of advice offered by Sri Krishna.. We can just do our work but, at the same time, we should have these two in our mind. One is to remember Him at all times, as He says to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita, “Remember me all the time you are fighting”. ‘Fighting’ here symbolises doing one’s own duty or work. The other thing is to offer all the results of our work to Him.

So let us remember these two points and that is all we have to do to achieve liberation. Does it not sound easy? If you follow this advice and work remembering God every second from morning till night, you can achieve liberation in no time. BUT of course, hearing this is one thing, practising it is quite another. We think of God this moment, but the next moment we start thinking about something else—our schedule, family and so on. Then again we remember God and start repeating His name, and we soon get distracted by thoughts about secular things. However, there is no other way than to go through this process for attaining liberation even when one performs duties sincerely. This is called ‘Sahaja Yoga’ where devotees try to think of God at every moment.

Japa in the Kali Yuga

Now I'll share something interesting. As you may know, there are four yugas, or ages, in the cycle of life of the universe: the Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwapara Yuga, and Kali Yuga. In each yuga, there is a common characteristic among most people in terms of sattvic, rajasic and tamasic natures. In the Satya Yuga, everyone is of a strong sattvic nature with only a bit of rajasic and tamasic aspects. In Treta Yuga, their sattvic nature diminishes and they assume a stronger rajasic nature and a even stronger tamasic nature. In Dwapara Yuga, the level of sattvic nature falls much more and the rajasic nature rises further. In the Kali Yuga, people have only a bit of the sattvic nature, much of rajasic nature and a lot more of tamasic nature.

Which spiritual practice is most beneficial to practice to attain liberation varies depending on the yuga, too. For the Satya Yuga, meditation is the best option. For the Treta Yuga, ‘yajna’ or rituals, and in the Dwapara Yuga, worship of God. In the Kali Yuga, where levels of rajasic and tamasic natures are high and sinful behaviours prevail, with only a very low level of sattvic nature in the world, japa, or repeating God’s name, always is the best spiritual practice. Just continuous chanting of the Lord’s name with faith and devotion leads us to liberation. Isn’t it worth trying?

We are now in the Kali Yuga, as we can see rajasic and tamasic natures prevailing wherever we go. We are in a very secular world full of sinful behaviours. So by chanting God’s name at all times, such as ‘Hare Krishna’ and ‘Govinda Jaya Jaya’ as we sang earlier today, or ‘Ramakrishna’ for the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, we can achieve liberation. For formal worship of God, we have to be at a specific place to worship, but we can practise japa wherever and whenever. For meditation and yajna, we need to learn how to do it properly, and again, these need special environments, but the practice of japa is possible anytime and anywhere. There are also so many other names of God we can choose from for japa according to our preference! So what we need is a little more motivation and self-effort.

Thank you, very much.

November 2018
(Anna Purna Farm)
Satsanga at Kikuchi City, Kumamoto Prefecture

On November 9th, at Mt. Annapurna Farm in Kikuchi City, Kumamoto Prefecture, hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Masaki, Swami Medhasananda (Maharaj) talked about "The Ideal Life of Householders in the Indian Tradition". It was a quiet location surrounded by nature and fourteen people participated and all enjoyed a peaceful atmosphere from beginning to end.

Maharaj began by discussing the Indian concept of the four stages of human life with Brahmacharya as the first of four stages of a human life, meaning learning about God and good conduct; followed by Grihastha, or life as a householder; Vanaprastha, renouncing worldly living; and Sannyasa, living as a renunciate.

In brief summary:

- Remove our desires and obsessions
- Identify the temporary from the eternal - enjoyments are temporary
- Work one's dharma and enjoy in moderation
- Constantly think of and stay connected to God
- Maintain a healthy body with hatha yoga and exercise
- Continuous spiritual practice will purify the mind
- Serve the poor and elderly as much as practical for you
- Make truth your habit

All the congregation listened attentively. After Maharaj's comments there was a Q&A session followed by a meditation. A lunch of local cuisine was enjoyed by everyone in holy company.

(Submitted by Ms Shanti Izumida)





Anna Purna Farm Group

November 2018

Satsanga in Kumamoto City International Center

On November 11th (Sun) from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., the '14th Annual Vedanta Satsanga' was held at Kumamoto City International Center in Kumamoto Prefecture. Swami Medhasanandaji (Maharaj) talked on 'Positive Living-Positive Way of Life'. The sponsor was 'Mother's Meeting' a group that holds monthly reading meetings of 'The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'. After the discourse attendees practiced meditation and had Q&A time with Maharaj. 34 people attended the discourse.

The following is an extract from the report provided by Kimiko Sonoda:

Seven years ago Maharaj talked on this theme, but many of the attendees this time heard the points presented in this talk for the first time. I have heard talks on this theme three times (including this time). I really feel that learning about the same theme repeatedly makes a deeper impression and listening repeatedly is very good.

Some attendees joined this discourse because they were interested in this topic and afterward, Maharaj was asked several questions. The questions are serious like 'How can we receive matters positively in our daily life?'. Maharaj explained to us how to live positively with simple words so that we can remember them well.

Words of encouragement: "Positive Living is chicken soup for the heart."

- ① Hope is living, despair is death.
- ② Ninety percent of our worries do not occur.
- ③ Chant 'I am all right' when you feel anxiety.

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- ④ Don't run away, face it.
- ⑤ Pray for God and practice meditation to be positive person.
- ⑥ Learn not to imitate.
- ⑦ Live this moment well.
- ⑧ Make and live by a daily schedule. A well balanced and proportioned life is important.
- ⑨ Only share your own thoughts with yourselves.
- ⑩ Live more slowly. Neither too slow nor too fast is good.
- ⑪ Be a honey bee, not a fly. (See the good points of others not their weak points.)
- ⑫ Your mind can become both your friend and your enemy. Be your friend.
- ⑬ Strength is life, weakness is death.
- ⑭ All power is inside you. There is a power spot within you, manifest it.
- ⑮ You can do it, if you think you can do it.

(Translated by Ms Atsumi Honda)





• A Story to Remember •

The Parable of the Sower

1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. 2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. 3 Then he told them many things in parables, saying:

“A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. 9 Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

10 The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”

11 He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12 Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables:

“Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. 14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: “

‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. 15 For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’

16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. 17 For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

18 “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means:

19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. 20 The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 22 The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. 23 But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

Matthew 13:1-23

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