



SEPTEMBER 2019 - Volume 17 Number 09
The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

OCTOBER 2019
Calendar

Birthdays

There are no birthdays of note in the Gregorian calendar month of October according to the Vishuddha Siddhanta Almanac.

Zushi Events

8th (Tue) 14:00~16:30

Gospel Class at Zushi

Please Contact:

benkyo.nvk@gmail.com

20th (Sun) 14:00~16:00

Zushi Half-day Retreat

Chanting, Readings on Spiritual Life
Discussion, Meditation, and Tea

Please Contact:

benkyo.nvk@gmail.com

27th (Sun) 19:00 ~

**Sri Sri Kali Puja
Zushi Annexe**

19:00 Puja Worship,
Pushpanjali
(offering of flowers),
21:00 Prasad

All are Welcome!

**Please Contact:
medhasananda@
gmail.com**

to participate in Puja

**More Detailed
Schedule on page 2.**



✧ Thus Spake ✧

"It is not possible to give up work altogether. Your very nature will lead you to it whether you like it or not. Therefore the scriptures ask you to work in a detached spirit, that is to say, not to crave for the work's results. To work in such a spirit of detachment is known as Karma Yoga."

- Sri Ramakrishna

"Established in yoga, O Arjuna, perform actions, giving up attachment, and unconcerned as to success or failure."

- Sri Krishna

August Zushi Retreat 2019
'Why We Celebrate Sri Krishna's Birth'

A talk by Swami Medhasananda

Since our Vedanta Society is a branch of the Sri Ramakrishna Math and Mission, why do we celebrate the birth of Sri Krishna? Suppose one were to visit an ISCON (Hare Krishna) temple, there would definitely not be any celebration of Sri Ramakrishna's birthday. Why do we study the lives of other great saints, incarnations of God, and the scriptures of other religions? It is because we want to get inspiration from them. When we read of their lives

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CALENDAR

October 2019

8th (Tue)

Gospel Class

Zushi Centre (14:00~16:30)

20th (Sun)

Half Day Retreat at Zushi

14:00~16:00

Chanting, Readings on Spiritual Life
Discussion, Meditation, Tea and snacks
Please bring your copy of "Bhagavad Gita"
and "Patanjali Yoga"

Contact: benkyo.nvk@gmail.com

25th (Fri)

Nara Narayan - Service to Homeless

Food Distribution

Contact: Yoko Sato

urara5599(at mark) gmail(dot)com

27th (Sun)

Sri Sri Kali Puja

Venue: Zushi Annexe

19:00 Puja Worship,

Pushpanjali (offering of flowers),

21:00 Prasad

All are Welcome!

Please contact if you intend to participate:
(medhasananda@gmail.com)

Every Saturday

Yoga Asana Class

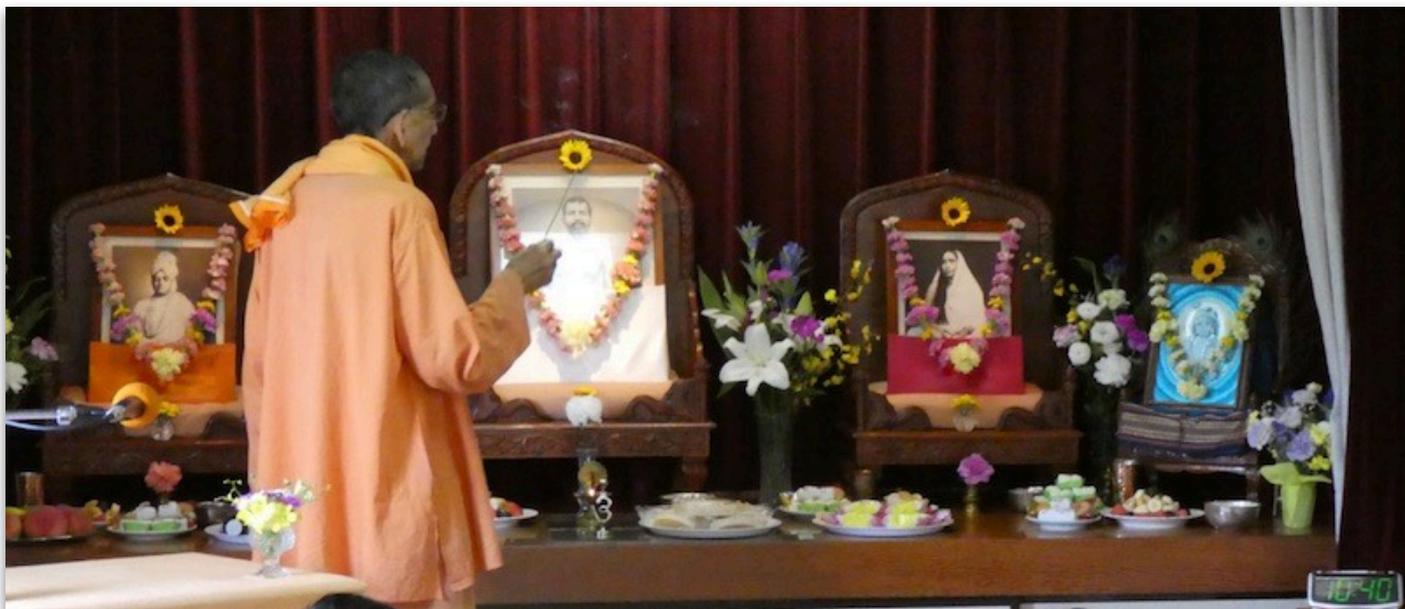
* Trial lessons are also available.

Zushi Annexe (10:30~12:00)

Contact: 080-6702-2308 (Hiroto Arai)

Email : ochanomizuyoga@gmail.com

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



Why We Celebrate Sri Krishna's Birth (from page 1)

we can feel happiness, because in the end, they are all manifestations of the same God.

We have discussed Swami Vivekananda's (Swamiji) talks at the world's first Parliament of Religions in Chicago many times, but his poignant final remark was that great saints have been born in all the major religions of the world, without exception. We get nourishment and support from their teachings. Here in the Vedanta Society we not only study the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, but we also read from Koran, the Bible and the Teachings of Lord Buddha. Similarly, in addition to our study of The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, we also study the Bhagavad Gita and the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Sri Ramakrishna also said that he had been born as Sri Krishna in a previous incarnation. This is another reason we have interest in the story of Sri Krishna's life.

The Ideal Householder

There are many incidents of Sri Krishna's life that reveal to us how to live an ideal life. One such story is that of the great sage Durvasa, who also possessed a rather irascible and imperious nature. Sri Krishna was a married householder and a king, and had many duties. Once Durvasa came to test him in performing his duties as an ideal householder. Durvasa's first request was that Krishna and his wife prepare and serve him lunch. Krishna's wife, Rukmini, then did as Durvasa asked. Afterward, the three of them then were talking a walk when Durvasa demanded that Krishna and Rukmini both pull his chariot like horses. Can you imagine making such a demand of a king, and even more audacious, making such a demand of God incarnate? But instead of indignant protestations, King Krishna and Queen Rukmini obliged with smiles, feeling no disgrace at all, even though they had not taken lunch themselves.

The king and queen accepted these tasks, because it is the duty of the householder is to please one's guests. The subjects of the realm witnessed Krishna and Rukmini suffer falls and bloody their knees as they toiled to pull the chariot. They shouted insults to Durvasa, but the King and Queen remained quiet. Durvasa finally brought the chariot to a halt, dismounted, and fell at Sri Krishna's feet, saying, 'O Lord, I see that you have accepted my demands to show others an ideal

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Why We Celebrate Sri Krishna's Birth (from page 3)

example of householders performing their duty.'

The Ideal of Non-attachment

Sri Krishna is also known as the God of love. There are many stories and depictions of the great love the gopis (cowherd girls) of Vrindavan had for Sri Krishna. Once He had to move to Mathura on the call of duty, and His departure left the gopis full of sadness and tears. However, Sri Krishna did exhibit any sadness or pangs owing to the consequent separation from his near and dear ones of Vrindavan. This shows that thought Sri Krishna was indeed the embodiment of love, His was love without attachment.

The Refuge of the Devotees

Because Sri Krishna was an incarnation of God, he was the refuge of the devotees. When devotees are in trouble, they pray to Sri Krishna, or to God, and God will come to their aid. The same is also seen in Jesus Christ's life, when those who took refuge in him were cured, or transformed, or saved. There are many examples of this in the life of Sri Krishna, wherein devotees would pray to Lord Krishna and He would help them. I would like to cite one example from the many of such episodes in the Mahabharata. In this episode about Draupadi, the Pandava brothers and Kauravas brothers were in the court of the king, and Kauravas brothers, Duryodhana and Duhshasana, hoped to humiliate Draupadi, as she had become the property of Duryodhana by winning a bet. The idea was to dishonour her by disrobing her in front of all the courtiers. Draupadi earnestly prayed to Sri Krishna to protect her honour, and in answer to her prayer, as the wicked Duhshasana tried to forcibly unwrap her sari, the length of cloth continued to lengthen as Sri Krishna continuously supplied it, thwarting the evil designs of Duhshasana.

Advice to Individuals

Sri Krishna also led the devotees on the paths of peace, knowledge and liberation, and all these teachings may be found in the verses of the Bhagavad Gita. Sri Krishna's advice to the devotees was also on an individual basis. For example, when Arjuna was facing war and refused to fight and kill his relatives fighting on behalf of rivals, Sri Krishna told him he must fight, as it was his duty as a warrior, in addition to the fact that the Kauravas king was evil. Yet Krishna advised another person, named Uddhava, to renounce worldly endeavours and devote himself solely to spiritual practices.

Sri Ramakrishna, too, would teach individuals based on their personal nature and spiritual capabilities. He would, for example, give one kind of advice to those young men who were destined to become monks, and give quite different advice to those destined to become, or who already were, householders.

Overcoming Maya

In our day to day lives we all experience some anxieties and fears. Though there is, of course,
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Why We Celebrate Sri Krishna's Birth (from page 4)

joy and pleasure, most of what we experience are measures of confusion, anxiety, fear and sadness. We worry about our body, our family, and our work. One of the explanations of this according to Indian philosophy, is that all this is due to the influence of Maya, or the Divine Illusion. What is this Maya? The two characteristics of Maya are that, first, Maya covers or veils the Truth, and second, Maya shows the unreal as real, and the real as unreal. Our true self is Sat-Chit-Ananda, or Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, however, we have forgotten this, and we are deluded into believing we are but our body and mind. Our body and mind are constantly changing and fluctuating, as when we are sick we identify with sickness and say, 'I am sick.' Then when we have worries and identify with the mind we say, 'I am worried.'



How do we overcome and get rid of this Maya? There will be no end of confusion, anxiety and fear until we do so. Everyone, without exception wants to know the answer to this, and the answer can be found in the Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 7 Verse 14, where it says:

daivī hyeṣhā guṇa-mayī mama māyā duratyayā
mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te

[The congregation then read in Japanese]

"This divine illusion of Mine, Maya, consisting of the three modes of the external energy, is very difficult to overcome; but those who surrender unto Me, can easily cross over it."

Maya can be likened to a vast, infinite sea, and Sri Krishna says that if we take refuge in Him, we will be able to overcome, or crossover, this Maya. It is not easy, however, to make God one's refuge, and I would like to take up this discussion this now.

God will not become our refuge by a simple wish, that is, indeed, wishful thinking. To truly take refuge in God requires much spiritual practice. If we think of this at the macro-level, everything we can see or perceive is Maya, the entire universe is Maya. Individually, or at the micro-level, what then is Maya?

The individual self is composed of the gross body, the senses, vital energy, mind, the discriminative faculty, or buddhi, memory and the ego. Without the mind there is no body consciousness. This manifestation of Maya is, therefore, from the mind. It is from the mind that all erroneous imagination, doubt, fear and body consciousness come from. If one may be ill, but the mind is focused on work, one will perform the work in spite of the illness. This is because there is no identification of the mind with the body at that time. Awareness of the very existence of the body is based on the mind.

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Why We Celebrate Sri Krishna's Birth (from page 5)

When Swami Akhandananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, had grown old, he experienced many pains of ageing. One night devotees had come to pay him a visit and talked until midnight. Akhandanandaji was very enthusiastic about the conversation and the devotees were listening with great interest. The swami's attendants, being concerned about the late hour, advised the swami to bring the discussion to an end and take some rest. The swami reluctantly ended his talk and the devotees were asked to return home. Soon afterward, however, Swami Akhandananda complained that during the visit of the devotees and his talk with them he had forgotten all his pains, but being left to himself again they had all now returned. He was not aware of pain when the mind was engaged in talking, and the pains immediately returned when his mind became conscious the body. This reveals how important the role of the mind is in our awareness of our own physical existence and, as a matter of fact, the existence of all the other things of the world.

Control of the Mind

In the Bhagavad Gita in Chapter 6 Verse 35, we read:

śhrī bhagavān uvācha
asanśhayam mahā-bāho mano durnigrahām chalam
abhyāsenā tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa cha grīhyate

[The congregation then read in Japanese, Sri Krishna's reply to Arjuna's observation that it is a most difficult task to control the ever fleeting mind.]

"Lord Krishna said: O mighty-armed son of Kunti, what you say is correct; the mind is indeed very difficult to restrain. But by practice and detachment, it can be controlled."

Abhyāsa yoga means continuous practice, and vairāgya means renunciation or letting go of one's ego and attachments. Separating oneself physically from family itself, does not mean renunciation, but non-attachment. In terms of abhyāsa yoga means continuous practice of renunciation, while one continuously focuses on God.

The Easiest Yoga; Bhakti Yoga

In Swami Vivekananda's lectures he said that the easiest and most natural way to renounce the world and to grow love for God is by the practice of Bhakti Yoga. There are other practices of yoga, too. In Karma Yoga, for example, one must renounce both attachment to work and attachment to its results. This is not at all easy, because most of us work seeking results. If one loses attachment to work and its results, does not one also lose motivation to work? Yet, Karma Yoga requires this. The focus of Raja Yoga is the mind, and its control over the three gunas or attributes of nature (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas). The Raja Yogi must overcome all these influences to become purified, and for the mind to become tranquil. Patanjali said one must control the waves of the mind to succeed. Yet, the most difficult yogic path to practice renunciation is that of Jnana Yoga. This is because at the very onset of practice one must detach the mind from the unreal. The

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Why We Celebrate Sri Krishna's Birth (from page 6)

Jnani must perceive everything we perceive as reality to be unreal and the consequence of the Divine Illusion or Maya. The Jnani must focus on the real alone, a most difficult task.

In comparison to the other yoga practices, Swami Vivekananda explains that Bhakti Yoga is the easier path. For example, take the love a man has for a woman, what happens if he falls in love with yet another woman? When this happens the love he had for the first woman naturally decreases and even vanishes altogether. The same can be said of a woman's love for a man, if she should fall for another man, her first love ends. A person loves one's hometown. A person born in Tokyo believes Tokyo is the best city in Japan, while another person born in Osaka, likes Osaka most. This is a natural attachment to our place of birth. As one's love for the whole country grows, however, the attachment to one's hometown diminishes. We can take this one step further by not restricting our love to one's country of birth, but expanding our love to all the nations of the world and to all of humanity itself. As we grow more love for the whole world, love of our country alone is replaced with a greater love for all.

A person who consistently dwells in the level of the senses will derive most of his pleasure from the senses. Then in the case of an intellectual or academician; for such a person, as he derives greater joy in intellectual pursuits, naturally, the joy he derives from the sense plane decreases. For example, by the sense plane we mean the joy of taking a meal, compared to that of reading a book. We have all witnessed dogs eat, animals are completely subject to the sense plane, and they eat with such gusto and passion, but with human beings such a sight is rare. Swami Vivekananda said that those who have had the direct experience of love of God will find spiritual joy far superior to any joys derived from the senses, such as work, family, or intellectual pursuits, or in the cultivation of the fine arts, like music etc. The pleasure derived from all such pursuits will wane in comparison to spiritual joy. Swamiji's conclusion is that Bhakti Yoga is a most natural way to renounce, as it is not a path one pursues fiercely with sudden, impassioned zeal. The more our love for God intensifies, our love and attraction for things other than God diminishes. This is how renunciation takes place in a natural process.

Taking Refuge in God in the Kali Yuga

How do we increase our love of God in this cycle of ages or yugas? In the Satya Yuga the main path to God realisation was the practice of meditation. In the Treta Yuga it was the path of worship and sacrifice. In the Dwapara Yuga the focus was on service and worship of God. In the Kali Yuga (the 4th and present cycle of ages) the easiest and most comfortable practice to realise God is the repetition of the Lord's name, or Japa. The meaning of a relevant Sanskrit verse is, 'For this Kali Yuga repetition of the Lord's name is the only way, there is no other way.' Why? Because God is the name, there is no difference – the name is that which it symbolises. If I call to Leonardo saying, "Srinath" or "Atsushi-san", Leonardo will not respond at all. The same applies to the repetition of God's name, which will lead us to God and His realisation.

• Thought of the Month •

"Everything that is made beautiful and fair and lovely, is made for the eye of one who sees."

- Rumi

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Why We Celebrate Sri Krishna's Birth (from page 7)

The other effective practice is to consider all works one does to be God's work; to become an instrument of God; and to offer God the results of those works. In so doing, God remains one's focus in one's day to day life.

In the Bhagavad Gita in Chapter 9 Verse 27, we read:

[The congregation then read in Japanese]

"Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer as oblation to the sacred fire, whatever you bestow as a gift, and whatever austerities you perform, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), do them as an offering to Me (the Lord)."

We read now on making God the centre of our lives in Chapter 18 Verse 65:

[The congregation again read in Japanese]

"Always think of Me, be devoted to me, worship me, and offer obeisance to me. Doing so, you will certainly come to Me. This is my pledge to you, for you are very dear to Me."

In the next verse, Gita 18:66, Sri Krishna promises to protect the devotees and remove sin.

[The congregation read in Japanese]

"Abandon all varieties of dharma (ritualism etc.) and simply surrender unto Me alone. I shall liberate you from all sinful reactions; do not fear."

Today we have discussed how to make God one's refuge. Love of God will grow if we put into practice Sri Krishna's teachings, beginning with the practice of Bhakti Yoga. Not just today, but with practice everyday, we can progress slowly and, finally, cross the ocean of Maya, the inscrutable Divine Illusion, and get eternal peace, eternal joy, and eternal happiness.

Thank you.



• A Story to Remember •

The Wounded Fence

Once there was a young boy who occasionally displayed a bad temper. As the boy grew his tantrums increased, prompting his father to devise a lesson to teach him self-control. So he presented his son with a large bag full of nails, and instructed him to drive one nail into the garden fence every time he lost his temper.

The son agreed, and on the very first day with many chores and studies to attend to, he pounded around two dozen nails into that fence. He suffered considerably from a lack of self-control that day. Over the course of the next few weeks, however, his temper came under control a bit better with each handful of nails hammered into the fence.

Eventually, the day came when he didn't drive one single nail into the fence, as he hadn't lost his temper even once. The boy soon realised it was much easier to control himself than to pound nails into the fence, and he gradually gained mastery over his temper.

The boy eventually confessed to his father that the bag of nails had been emptied and that he hadn't needed any more nails at all. Pleased, his father said that for each complete day the boy held his temper, he should go out to the fence and pull one nail from it.

After a few months the boy reported to his father that all the nails had all been removed from the fence. Pleased again, the father asked his son to join him as he went to inspect the fence. His son beamed as his father examined the pock-marked fence.

His father wasn't quite as happy saying, "Just look how full of holes that fence is," he said. "It'll never be as strong as it once was, but I hope you remember something."

"Yes, Sir?" asked the boy.

"When you let anger rule your tongue and take control of your mind, you create deep, lasting scars that remain no matter how many times you may say that you are sorry, or wish that you could take your words back."

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