



OCTOBER 2019 - Volume 17 Number 10
The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

NOVEMBER 2019
Calendar

Birthdays

**Swami
Subodhananda**

Saturday, 09 November

**Swami
Vijnanananda**

Monday, 11 November

Zushi Events

23rd (Sat) 5:00~20:00

Akhanda Japam

You can join at a time convenient to your schedule for a single hour or more. This is easy practice for the beginner.

Please contact us at:
benkyo.nvk(at)
mark)gmail(dot)com

17th (Sun) 10:30~16:30

**November Zushi
Retreat**

AM Session
Chanting, Reading,
Discourse
Lunch Prasad
PM Session
Chanting, Reading,
Discourse Q&A

**More Detailed
Schedule on page 2.**



✧ Thus Spake ✧

"Always try to do the Lord's work and at the same time try to practise japa and meditation. If you do such work, your mind will not be obsessed with evil thoughts. If you sit alone idly, all sorts of thoughts may come and disturb your mind."

- Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi

"Make truth, self-restraint and good acts your lines and the utterances of the Name your ablutions."

- Guru Nanak

September Zushi Retreat 2019

'How Holy Mother's Message Can Help the Householder's Life'

by special guest speaker, Swami Divyanandaji

[The Vedanta Society of Japan generally holds its monthly retreat on the 3rd Sunday of each month. This September, the retreat was delayed for one week due to a special visit by Swami Divyanandaji, Secretary of Ramakrishna Mission Saradapita, Belur, who had arrived on the 21st of September, accompanied by an assistant, Swami Pratibodhinanda. The swami is also a member of the Board of Trustees of Ramakrishna Math and of the Governing Body of Ramakrishna Mission. Additionally, the Japan Vedanta Centre's resident monk, Swami Medhasanandaji, also sought to take advantage of the occasion to introduce to the congregation, Swami Divyanathanandaji, the new Assistant Swami of the Vedanta Society of Japan, who had arrived on 2nd September. Finally, the Vishuddha Siddhanta Almanac lists the birth anniversary of Swami Abhedanandaji, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, who would later take charge of the Vedanta Society in New York in 1897 on the 23rd of September this year.]

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THE VEDANTA SOCIETY of JAPAN
CALENDAR of EVENTS

November 2019

3rd (Sun) 14:00~16:00

Half Day Retreat at Zushi

Chanting, Readings on Spiritual Life
Discussion, Meditation, Tea and snacks
Please bring your copy of "Bhagavad Gita" and "Patanjali Yoga"
Contact:
<benkyo.nvk(at mark)gmail(dot)com>

12th (Tue) 14:00~16:30

Gospel Class

Zushi Centre
Contact:
<benkyo.nvk(at mark)gmail(dot)com>

17th (Sun) (10:30~16:30)

November Zushi Retreat

AM Session
Chanting, Reading, Discourse
Lunch Prasad
PM Session
Chanting, Reading, Discourse Q&A
All, with family and friends, are welcome to attend!

22nd (Fri)

Nara Narayan - Service to Homeless

Food Distribution in Yokohama
Contact: Yoko Sato
<urara5599(at mark)gmail(dot)com>

23rd (Sat)

Akanda Japam (Special Japam and Meditation Day)

Akanda Japam: We hold a Special Japam and Meditation Day twice a year.
Participants make japam or meditate, hour by hour,
continuously in silence creating a holy atmosphere.
You can join at a time convenient to your schedule for a single hour or more.
This is easy practice for the beginner. Please contact us at:
<benkyo.nvk(at mark)gmail(dot)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(at mark)gmail(dot)com>
Info at: <<http://zushi-hatayoga.jimdo.com>>



How Holy Mother's Message Can Help the Householder's Life (from page 1)

I salute the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi and the Great Master, Sri Ramakrishna, and I express my sincere gratitude and respect to Swami Medhasananda for arranging this retreat the day after our arrival to this Ashrama.

God as Mother

Even in brief moments, holy company helps us to cross the ocean of the world. Three things indeed rare are: 1) a human birth, 2) the desire for liberation, and 3) holy association or shelter at the feet of a holy guru. We believe that Mother, or as we say in India, 'Ma', a single word, is considered a maha-mantra (great mantra) and the most powerful of all words. I have visited many areas of India and certain other foreign countries, and I have seen many prefer to call upon God as Mother. Some love the Holy Mother even more than the Great Master, Sri Ramakrishna.

In 2014 I visited the USA and Canada. At the San Diego, California Centre I met a Miss Clemmy (Mrs. Clementine Rigby) in the early morning, at that time she was one hundred and three years old. She appeared to be very frail and ill and we asked if she had an attendant or nurse at night. She answered that she needed no one else, because she lived with Mother and keeps photographs of Mother on each of the four walls of her room.

Holy Mother herself said that the Motherhood of God was expressed in the Great Master Sri Ramakrishna, and that He had left Her to express this idea to all devotees and to all people. When our Order was initiated, Swami Vivekananda declared that Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi is the Mother of the Order (Sangha Janani). We all know that Sri Ramakrishna would always say that Sri Sarada is Sri Saraswati the giver of wisdom and spiritual knowledge. However, Sri Sarada, the Holy Mother, was very humble, and would never consider Herself as a Guru or preacher. She used

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to tell, "For me to give instruction? The teachings of the Master have already been published in books, please read them." Holy Mother continued, "If one can comprehend just one of the Great Master's teachings and live accordingly, everything will have been attained."

Mother Accepts Responsibility

We know that Sri Ramakrishna worshipped Sri Sarada at

Dakshineswar on the auspicious day of Phalaharini Kali-Puja (June 1872) as the sacred deity of Mother Kali. Sri Ramakrishna also knew he would not live for long and wanted to hand over the responsibility of a future spiritual organisation composed of sannyasins (renunciate monks) as well as devotees to Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi. We know that most members of the Ramakrishna Sangha or Mission are householders, and very few are sannyasins or brahmacharis (novice monks) like myself. Though initially She was reluctant, Holy Mother ultimately agreed to Sri Ramakrishna's proposal and took upon Herself the spiritual ministrations and responsibility of the organisation. This means responsibility for the spiritual life of devotees, as well as monastic members of this great worldwide organisation.

It gives us wonder, that like Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother did not study so many scriptures or books, but when we go through Her instructions and messages, we see that the scriptures of Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Mohammedans, and all religions, are in agreement with Her teachings. This is the uniqueness of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi. When we go through the books published about Her life and teachings and the Gospel of the Holy Mother, we see She gives us the necessary support and gives us the strength to lead our lives in this materialistic world. Sannyasins and householders alike, can get inspiration in leading our lives in reading from Her teachings. When we face life's troubles, if we read Holy Mother's Gospel, we will find definite solutions.

Simple Words and Profound Messages

Mother's words are so very simple, that any attempt to analyse them, robs them of their original spiritual charm. So it is not wise for scholars to analyse her messages, because Her words hit and affect those who are on the path of spiritual seekers directly. According to Her, being initiated with a mantra or repetition of a mantra purifies the body. "God," she said, "has given fingers, in order that they may be blessed by counting japa (meditative repetition) of the mantra. When a pure mind performs japa, the mantra bubbles up spontaneously from within without any

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How Holy Mother's Message Can Help the Householder's Life (from page 4)

thought on its part. One who reaches this state attains success in japa."

Holy Mother says one must devote some time for prayer even in the midst of the busy hours of the day. "I used to be very busy," Mother said, "during my stay at Dakshineswar. Yet, I did my prayer and meditation regularly."

Mother advised spiritual devotees to be patient in times of difficulties and troubles. She said, "Misery is a sign of God's compassion." Miseries will come, but we must look at them in a different way. Mother believed misery to be a part of Divine compassion, and that miseries will flow away like waters. Mother's advice to devotees was to pray to the Divine with sincere tears in one's eyes during times of trouble and to remain content. Mother said, "Contentment is the richest wealth, and patience the highest quality."

Someone once asked Mother what spiritual practice was. Mother answered, "Spiritual practice means to keep the mind steady at the lotus feet of God, and to be absorbed in His thoughts." In such simple language Mother would answer the questions posed by devotees. Her practical answers would solve the devotees problems as well.

Messages for All

As said earlier, Holy Mother's teachings were for everyone, both monastics and householders, but they were especially applicable to women. Mother says nicely that women should not get angry so easily, and they must practice forbearance. She also said to women, "In infancy and childhood our parents are our only protection, and in youth our husbands. We should be patient and try to put up with parents and husbands, in spite of difficulties." This advice is in support of the householder's life.

Mother used to say that one should not hurt others, even with words. One must not even speak an unpleasant truth unnecessarily. By indulging in rude words, one's nature becomes coarse. One's sensibility is lost, if one has no control over one's speech. Mother said that Sri Ramakrishna once said that one should not ask a lame person how he went lame. If one needs to know, however, it is better to bring up the topic in an indirect way, for example, "Does the change in weather cause you much pain?" Such examples reveal how practical Mother was in realising and giving solutions to the problems people came to her with.

To be a sadhu or a devotee, we must first be a gentle man. Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi taught us how to be gentle men and women – how to talk and deal with others. Mother beautifully says, "Whenever you go from one place to another, observe the things around you, and keep oneself well informed about the happenings around where you live, but keep you lips sealed."

The goal of human life is nothing but God or spiritual realisation. Holy Mother knew this and advised everyone to do japam to achieve it. She believed that only doing japam with a pure

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mind and pure heart will give us success in spiritual practice. "Japat Siddhi Japat Siddhi," means japam leads to siddhi, or the goal. I once went to Ahmedabad in Gujarat and a young man, like Leonardo here, was attending to me very meticulously, so I asked him, "Do you have any desire in your mind?" He said, "I have now Maruti 800 (economy automobile) and I desire to have a Maruti Esteem (more costly), I pray to Sri Ramakrishna for this only."

Mother knew that when desires are fulfilled by God, that person is very pleased, but when all their desires are not fulfilled, people suffer. Mother advised to pray for desireless-ness, if you want to see God. The fellow in this story did indeed get his Maruti Esteem, but soon he desired a Mercedes Benz or even a Ferrari costing up one or more crore rupees (over \$150,000). All such desires cannot be fulfilled and we believe he will not get his Ferrari. Thakur will give him ultimate bliss, because he is a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. He will realise that all desires cannot be fulfilled, and that he should try to realise God. He works for God, but has desires in his mind, so he is not satisfied.

Life is full of a mix of good and bad. There are good people in the world, as well as bad. Holy Mother considered all people as Her children. She expressed this very beautifully saying, "If my child gets covered with mud or dust, is it not my duty to cleanse him and take him on my lap?" Mother did this throughout Her life. She once said, "Amjad (a Muslim and convicted thief is as much my son as Sarat (Swami Saradananda - Her caretaker)." We know that men and women, who were not liked by other devotees, would frequently come to Holy Mother with complaints. Holy Mother countenanced these visits by troublesome people, saying that she can never refuse anyone who addresses her as Mother.

Words of Hope and Protection

Mother's words were words of great hope and protection. She said, "Whenever you are in distress, say to yourself, 'I have a mother.'" We have a Mother to protect us. Let me share here one incident in Holy Mother's life. She was in Jayrambati (hometown) at one time when there had been no rain, and the farmers were in danger of starvation. Some farmers came to Holy Mother's house saying, "Mother, you can do everything. Please do something to bring the rain immediately, so we don't have to starve with our families." Holy Mother then went with them to observe the fields they cultivated. Seeing the dry fields She raised her hands and prayed to the Great Master (Sri Ramakrishna) saying, "Master, you solve this problem, otherwise these children of mine will have to die of starvation." Actually, within a short time the rains came, and that year brought one of the richest harvests to the area. This is a sign of the great compassion Holy Mother had for these men and women of the village.

I was very fortunate to have been associated or to have seen three children of Holy Mother. One was my diksha guru, from whom I later got my Brahmachari and Sannyasa, Swami Vireshwarananda, the 10th President of our Order. Another was a very senior swami, at that time nearly 100 years old, Swami Shantanandaji, and the other was a Swami Shantoshanandaji. There was a very similar incident involving farmers, except that these farmers were heard praying to

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How Holy Mother's Message Can Help the Householder's Life (from page 6)

Allah to bring rain, as there had been no rain. Shantoshananda approached Shantanandaji saying, "You are a child of Holy Mother, pray to Holy Mother for rain."

Shantanandaji smiled and said, "You are also Mother's child, why do you not pray?"

Shantoshanandaji then with folded hands began praying in a low voice with tears in his eyes., and Shantanandaji soon joined him in prayers for rain. At that time I was a 3rd year student and taken initiation from Swami Vireshwarananda, then after dinner I went to my bed to sleep. Soon torrential rains began to fall, and I felt that the very tears of these great souls had become these raindrops to relieve the drought of Bengal. This teaches us that when we are associated with these ideas, then compassion and unselfish love for others will be ours.

Mother; Home of Compassion

Swami Vivekananda said that unselfishness is God. This love for everyone was demonstrated by Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, his brother disciples, and their disciples as well. This is being continued, and our senior swamis are looked upon by the devotees as their mother, father, friend, philosopher and guide. When I go to some centres, where I meet the devotees, they tell me their swami is like their mother; some say he is like their father; then some say he is like their very close friend. It is the association with God, or holy company (satsanga), that gives us this. Expansion is life, contraction is death. Religion or spiritual life leads to expansion, to love the universe.

With this I conclude, and I am very thankful to you for listening to me for such a long time. Let me conclude with an invocation to the Holy Mother:

You, home of compassion,
Supreme Goddess,
Grant us refuge of your feet
And show mercy to us,
Your lowly children.

To You salutations, O Sarada!
The giver of wisdom,
Ever veiled In modesty,
Compassion's home.
Save us always from sin,
Salutations to Thee!

• Thought of the Month •

"Everything has beauty,
but not everyone sees it."

- Confucius

This prayer is part of the hymn, Prakritim Paramam, written by Swami Abhedanandaji Maharaj. Today, on this special occasion, I salute Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Abhedananda and the other disciples, too. Namaskar to one and all." •



Sunset at Zushi Beach



Vedanta Society's Participation at Tokyo's Annual Namaste India Event

'Ganga CD Shop'

by Society Secretary, Atsushi Suzuki

Namaste India was held on Saturday and Sunday, the 28th and 29th of September 2019, at Yoyogi Park, Tokyo, again this year. The Vedanta Society of Japan operated a booth this year under the name of 'GANGA CD SHOP'.

Last year, Namaste India was hit by a typhoon, but this year the weather was not bad and, in fact, a little warm for this time of year. With the cooperation of several volunteers from 7:30 on Saturday morning, we were able to unload and set up our booth with books, CDs, and miscellaneous goods, etc., and have everything properly displayed for the opening.

At around 10:00 in the morning visitors were streaming into the event and crowding the isles of vendors and authentic Indian food stalls. Customers were steadily visiting our 'Shop', and it was lively with sales of books, CDs, incense sticks, mats and tote-bags proceeding well.

This year, Swami Divyanathanandaji, the new Assistant Swami of the Society, also participated. The swami kindly responded to questions asked by foreign and local guests as well. I tried my best to help with Japanese questions.

There were many visitors this year and sales were fairly strong over the two-day event. I want to offer my personal thanks to all the volunteers who helped out this year and made the event a success for the Vedanta Society of Japan.

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Namaste India (from page 9)

Swami Divyanathananda also added the following remarks:

"Namaste India is a grand festival. I was surprised to see so many Japanese people taking interest in an Indian festival. The cultural programmes were also really nice. These kinds of festivals act as a platform for two cultures to come together. Food, dress, music and dance are the main components of a culture, and needless to say, at Namaste India these aspects of Indian culture were nicely displayed."

"Our stall, too, attracted a large number of visitors, Japanese as well as Indians. Through our participation at Namaste India, many people who already knew about the Ramakrishna Mission, also came to know that it has a branch in Japan as well. Yoga is becoming a household word in foreign countries, so those having interest in yoga and it's practices have come to know about Ramakrishna and Vivekananda through the books offered by us at Namaste India." •



● A Story to Remember ●

Distinctions

The Master was strolling with some of his disciples along the bank of a river. He said, "See how the fish keep darting about wherever they please. That's what they really enjoy".

A stranger overhearing that remark said, "How do you know what fish enjoy? You're not a fish".

The disciples gasped at what they took for impudence.

The Master smiled at what he recognized as a fearless spirit of inquiry. He replied affably, "And you, my friend, how do you know I am not a fish? You are not I".

The disciples laughed, taking this to be a well-deserved rebuff.

Only the stranger was struck by its depth. All day he pondered it, then came to the monastery to say, "Maybe you are not as different from the fish as I thought. Or I from you".

MORSEL:

No man desires anything so eagerly as God desires to bring men to the knowledge of Himself. God is always ready, but we are very unready. God is near us, but we are far from Him. God is within, and we are without. God is friendly - we are estranged. - Meister Eckhart (1260-1328)

Short Wisdom Stories from Fr. Anthony de Mello

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