



OCTOBER 2022 -VOLUME 20 NUMBER 10

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN



Birthdays

Swami Subodhananda
Saturday, 5 November

Swami Vijnanananda
Monday, 7 November

Thus Spake

*The ancient Masters were profound and subtle.
Their wisdom was unfathomable.
There is no way to describe it;
all we can describe is their appearance.*

*They were careful as someone crossing an iced-over stream.
Alert as a warrior in enemy territory.
Courteous as a guest.
Fluid as melting ice.
Shapable as a block of wood.
Receptive as a valley.
Clear as a glass of water.*

*Do you have the patience to wait
till your mud settles and the water is clear?
Can you remain unmoving
till the right action arises by itself?*

*The Master doesn't seek fulfillment.
Not seeking, not expecting,
He is present, and can welcome all things.*

— Lao Tzu

In this Issue:

- | | | | |
|--|---------|---------------------|---------|
| • Thus Spake / Birthdays | page 01 | • Story to Remember | page 15 |
| • Monthly Program Schedule | page 02 | | |
| • Fulfilment in Life
Talk by Swami Medhasananda | page 03 | | |
| • Excerpts of Interview of Sw. Medhasananda
Reprinted from Anjali | page 10 | | |
| • Some Photos from Kali Puja | page 13 | | |

Vedanta Society of Japan

Message Regarding Monthly Programmes for November 2022

Although COVID restrictions imposed by the Japanese government with the recent wave of the Omicron variant have been partially lifted, many precautions will remain in place.

Vedanta Society of Japan continues to observe social distancing, mask wearing, and avoid crowding in programme areas. Attendance to the Zushi Monthly Retreat and participation in other programs remains space limited, so please contact us if you wish to attend either of these programmes.

Swami Medhasananda, President
Vedanta Society of Japan

NOVEMBER 2022 Calendar of Programmes

5th (Sat) November

Bhagavad Gita Study Class at the Indian Embassy

* Video uploaded later

10:30 ~ 12:00 (In Japanese only)

9th (Wed) November

Weekly Upanishad Study Class

8:30 ~ 9:30 (in Japanese only), Zoom

13th (Sun) November

Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna Study Class

Live Streaming [Click here](#) to go to YouTube

14:00 ~ 16:00 (in Japanese only), Zoom

16th (Wed) November

Weekly Upanishad Study Class

8:30 ~ 9:30 (in Japanese only), Zoom

20th (Sun) November

Monthly Zushi Retreat

Bi-Lingual Live Streaming [Click here](#) to go to YouTube

10:30 ~ 16:30 (in Japanese only), Zoom

23rd (Wed) November

Akhand Japam

5:00 ~ 20:00 (contact: vedanta.karmayoga@gmail.com)

26th (Sat) November

Bhagavad Gita Study Class in Osaka

10:30 ~ 16:30 (in Japanese only)

(contact: gita.benkyoukai.kansai@gmail.com)

Fulfilment in Life

By Swami Medhasananda

Before starting to give my opinion on this topic, I would like to ask the audience what they think is Fulfilment in Life.

(Some responses from the audience:

- Family members are healthy, I can overcome hurdles and can complete my duties
- Can grow as a person, as growth gives a sense of accomplishment and happiness
- That I do my duties to the best of my abilities, leaving no stone unturned
- Can have spontaneous good and noble thoughts with the mind not being pulled down by lower desires; every act is done as an offering to God
- To be in a state of *Stithpragya*, a balanced state of mind; with no remorse of past, present, or future
- Going beyond the body mind consciousness
- Attaining *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*

)

First, I would like to say, fulfilment in life and success are not synonymous. The most successful person in life may be the most unsuccessful in leading an inner life. For example, an externally successful person may not be able to control his senses, he may have dissatisfactions, worries and tensions and, also a feeling of loneliness. And about these, other people may have no idea at all. However, fulfilment in life is more concerned with an ideal inner life.

Fulfilment comes from the word 'fulness' which in Sanskrit language is called 'Purnam'. The state of fulness is masterly explained in the following verse of the Bhagavad Gita:

यं लब्ध्वा चापरं लाभं मन्यते नाधिकं ततः |
यस्मिन्स्थितो न दुःखेन गुरुणापि विचाल्यते ||6.22||

*yaṁ labdhvā chāparam lābham manyate nādhikam tataḥ
yasmin sthito na duḥkhena guruṇāpi vichālyate*

Obtaining which one does not think of any other acquisition to be superior to that and being established in which one is not perturbed even by great sorrow.

According to me, this is the best definition of fulfilment in life. First of all, fulness of heart. Secondly, one will experience a joy which is continuous, steady, and eternal. Then peace which too is steady, continuous, and eternal. Then there will be a sense of satisfaction which will always prevail. So, all of these put together - joy, peace, satisfaction. The source of this joy, satisfaction and peace is inside, not outside. Even though some of you mentioned that work and family etc. contribute to fulfillment in life, these external factors cannot be relied upon for fulfillment. Because, as we know, work and family etc. are conditioned by circumstances, and there is no guarantee that they will be always the same. There may be changes, there may be separation and so many similar kinds of possibilities. So, if we depend on any of the external things for fulfilment, there is every possibility that finally we would not achieve it.

This point is mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita, Chapter five, verse 21:

बाह्यस्पर्शेष्वसक्तात्मा विन्दत्यात्मनि यत्सुखम् ।
स ब्रह्मयोगयुक्तात्मा सुखमक्षयमश्नुते ॥5.21॥

*bāhya-sparśheṣvasaktātmā vindatyātmāni yat sukham
sa brahma-yoga-yuktātmā sukham akṣhayam aśhnute*

With his heart unattached to external objects, he gets the bliss that is in the Self. With his heart absorbed in meditation on Brahman, he acquires undecaying Bliss.

Then another verse, number 24, in the same chapter:

योऽन्तःसुखोऽन्तरारामस्तथान्तर्ज्योतिरेव यः ।
स योगी ब्रह्मनिर्वाणं ब्रह्मभूतोऽधिगच्छति ॥5.24॥

*yo 'ntaḥ-sukho 'ntar-ārāmas tathāntar-jyotir eva yaḥ
sa yogī brahma-nirvāṇaṁ brahma-bhūto 'dhigachchhati*

One who is happy within, whose pleasure is within, and who has his light only within, that yogi, having become Brahman, attains absorption in Brahman.

The pertinent point of fulfilment is to look within. Then the other point is, there will be no sense of want and no sense of loneliness, even if he lives alone; and there will be no feelings of emptiness or insecurity in our heart either. Fulfilment in life encompasses all these things, not just external happiness. Because even if there is happiness outside, but inside there are lots of worries, fear, greed, emptiness, sense of insecurity that state cannot be called a state of fulfilment.

Even if he is put in very strained situation his mind remains always quiet and peaceful-in other words it is the sameness of mind. In Bhagavad Gita, there is a word 'Samatvam Yoga Ucchyate' - sameness of mind is Yoga. Irrespective of the situation around him, the tranquility of his mind will not be disturbed. He will not be overwhelmed by either joy or sorrow, failure or success.

Now, what is non-fulfilment? The symptoms of non-fulfilment are: suffering from a sense of tension, fear, dissatisfaction, want, loneliness and insecurity. If there are these symptoms in the life of a person, then we may say, there is no fulfilment in his life.



Why does this happen? Most people want fulfilment from a thing, which itself is finite, relative, non-eternal, always changing. So how can one expect ultimate and eternal fulfilment from a source, which itself is finite? Moreover, with abundance of external things we cannot make emptiness of our heart full. But more than often people mistakenly think that if they have plenty of material things, that will make their lives fulfilled. To the contrary, a material life ends in disappointment and frustration.

Let us give some examples. Everyone wants a good physical health until last and some are very much focused on it. They spend a lot of time on gathering information about keeping a good health and how to look beautiful. For that they read books, health magazines, watch TV shows etc. Their whole mind is focussed on that, as if, by being healthy and beautiful looking, their life will be fulfilled. But despite best care taken there is always a possibility of disease and loss of power. Moreover, with advanced age, the process of degeneration starts which we cannot stop. Hence mere sound and beautiful physique cannot give us fulfilment.

Again, some people are very much fond of beautiful dress or beautiful house or expensive foreign cars. Some people think money will give them fulfilment. The poor think if they have money they shall be fulfilled. The rich too think if they have more money, then their life will be fulfilled. Obviously, there is no guarantee that a poor person will be able to get a lot of money. On the other hand the rich businessmen suffer from a sense of worries related to their business. Moreover, when a rich person finds a man richer than himself, he may feel jealous, and may try to earn money in unethical ways. All these finally lead to sufferings. Hence whether you have money, or you don't have, in both of the cases people suffer if they focus too much on money as it will not bring them fulfilment.

Then some people focus on power and position. Some have an ambition to become the CEO of a reputed company, thinking that if they become so, their life will be fulfilled. If such a person cannot become a CEO, he will be sad. But if he somehow does become the CEO, then he has to undergo continuous stress and tension. For example, if the company doesn't earn enough profit, the Members of the Board of Governors of the company may remove him. Even if all these things do not happen, one day he will retire when he loses his power, position and prestige. Then nobody will care about him though earlier many people obeyed him and showed him honour which would make him sad. So, fulfilment of ambitions as a CEO too has its limits.

Now, consider celebrities such as, cinema stars, musicians, and sports players. Many people have an ambition and feel that if they can become a cinema star, or a renowned baseball player, or a famous singer, or a reputed author then their life will be fulfilled. I saw the video of an interview of the late Hemanta Mukherjee, a famous singer of Bengali and Hindi songs. In the interview, he said that before the release of every new album of his songs, he used to have lot of tension, as he worried whether this album would be liked by his fans or not. I have been told the same thing about Amitabha Bachchan, the megastar of Indian film, that whenever there would be release of a new film in which he acted he would be tensed.

I also read about a star cricket player of India that when once his team had lost a cricket match, his fans became so frustrated and disgusted, that they stoned his residential house where his relatives were living. So on the one hand, followers and fans of celebrities adore the stars so much, that they keep their photos, posters etc. and want to make the idols of their life, but on the other hand, if the stars cannot come up to the fans' expectations, then the fans' love turns to hatred and disgust. Is this fulfilment?

Hence we remarked that material success is not synonymous with fulfilment. There is a film in Bengali, called Nayak meaning hero. A very famous actor of Bengal called Uttam Kumar played the leading role in that movie. A reporter asked the actor, that your life must be fulfilled, because you are a celebrity and you have all things abundantly which people want. The actor said, yes, I am a celebrity, I have many worldly possessions still I feel some sort of emptiness within, something I miss which I cannot explain. It shows again that though there is an external success there is not fulfilment in life.

Now one may reasonably argue: are the lives of the celebrities in vain, are their perseverance, rigorous disciplines, long life of struggles to become a celebrity useless, don't they get any sort of fulfilment?' Our reply is that the 'Sadhana' the celebrities have to undertake to become a celebrity is definitely highly praiseworthy; nevertheless, from the spiritual point of view their fulfilment is partial not perfect. For achieving a perfect fulfilment in life one needs to resort to spiritual ways.

There is a well-known novel called 'The Monk who sold his Ferrari'. The hero, Julien Mantle, was a very famous lawyer, who had earned a lot of money, but due to his out of balance life-style, which was too hectic, he suffered a heart attack. This led to him doing some self-introspection and self-analysis. Finally, he gave up his job and went to India in search of something which would give him fulfilment, which he ultimately got.

Now can we combine these two? We want to accumulate lot of wealth, and satisfy many more worldly desires yet at the same time, we want to have a life with full of peace and tranquillity? Many people hope for that. The answer is, it is not possible. We cannot have both. We need to choose one of these. Therefore, our scriptures again and again say, if you want to build up your spiritual life, you have to reduce greed and attachment towards temporal things. So, we have to make a choice between things and eternal and non-eternal. If one wants a spiritual life, his main focus should be on the eternal. We do need money for our day to day living, food, clothing, etc., but our main focus should be on the eternal substance as non eternal things cannot give us fulfilment in life.

As we discussed, if we are focused on external, transient things, we have an unfulfilled life and we have a sense of emptiness in our hearts. When does this sense of emptiness become apparent ? Generally speaking, when people are young, they are busy with studies; after studies they search for a job and after getting a job and receiving salary, they think of marriage. Next children are born to them after which nurturing the children and educating them occupy their minds. Once this stage is reached, and in case of an average person mostly at the age of forty, they confront with a fundamental question about life— what next? In Sanskrit it is called '*Atah kim?*' The basic goals of average life, viz., having education, job, marriage, children are now fulfilled. What next? This is a common experience though people may not divulge it. But at that stage often people feel: is it not a monotony, a drudgery to follow same routine every day, that is, going to the office in the morning, returning home in the evening, watching TV, going to bed; has this life to be dragged almost until the last? Is this sort of life they really dreamt about in their youth? Will it bring fulfilment in my life? However, mostly answers to these questions are not known to them which causes a mental restlessness and inner dissatisfaction which they do not know how to resolve.

I am reminded of a young Indian couple, who were religious minded but not interested in spiritual life. They were in their forties. They had good education, good jobs, an intelligent and smart child. One day the wife gave me a call and wanted to know about initiation. I asked why would you like to know? She said, at the present stage of our life I am often confronted with this question, what next? What will give us fulfilment? I discussed and explained spiritual life to her which impressed her. Finally, both she and her husband got interested in spiritual life and took initiation.

There is a famous autobiographical novel in Bengali called Mahasthavirjatak written by Premankur Atarhi. In one summer night the author could not sleep and tossed on the bed. Finally giving up the hope of sleep he stepped out of the room where his wife and children were in deep sleep. He stood in the veranda and there was midnight darkness and stillness all around. Suddenly this thought came to his mind - who are they sleeping inside? What type of relationship do I have with them as if all these human relationships are mere illusion. Moreover, towards the end of his life, a rich man sometimes ponders thus: I spent my whole life toiling day and night and suffered from

lots of troubles and tensions to amass money. But now when I am going to die what shall I do with a very big bank balance? Can I carry a single penny with me when I die? The obvious answer is no. Such thought makes the frustrated exposes that they have to leave the stage of life with such an unfulfilled and despaired heart.

Again suppose a renowned author wrote many books, earned name and fame, he may also think in the same way in his last days: I have so much name and fame, titles and prizes, now when I am about to die, can I carry medals and prizes that I have been awarded, and the name and fame I have gained? No. Nothing will go with me when I pass away. Similar things may happen in the lives of games and sports, and cinema and music celebrities. Such thoughts cause agony in their heart showing they die without the satisfaction and peace of a fulfilled life.

What average people do in case when they confront serious thoughts about life and its fulfilment? Most of them try to suppress these thoughts when they appear. They brush these thoughts away. Some seek new ways of enjoyment. But every day you can't have new enjoyment and fun.

Again some people want to keep themselves busy as they are afraid to face such questions. Even in spare moments, they want to be occupied with small things which are less important and make them busy without real business. Some people don't want to stay alone. Because, when they are alone, these type of thoughts, or a kind of emptiness, or a sense of insecurity will appear in their mind. As we said, many people want to suppress these thoughts which may also lead to some mental problem or disease.

However, our suggestion would be, not to suppress these serious questions about life, but to face them and to seek satisfactory answers to them. Study of scriptures or listening to relevant discourses by the qualified preceptors will help one to get an appropriate answer. In India monks give singular services in such cases.

Our topic is fulfilment in life, which ensues from building up an inner life. Building an inner life signifies that we need to connect ourselves with the substratum of our personality, which is Atman. For most of the people, they have no idea about Atman or God, that is why they suffer from emptiness. But if they try to understand the concept of Atman, then they will be able to solve this problem of emptiness.

We have different layers of our personality: physical, mental, moral, intellectual and spiritual.

If we are unaware of the spiritual layer, which is the substratum of our personality, then something is lacking in our growth. Unawareness of the substratum of our personality, that is Atman, is responsible for creating the emptiness in our heart. So we must be aware of the substratum of our personality. We must not merely focus our attention on the structure of life, but the foundation of it. In modern age, the main problem is, we focus on the structure and not on the foundation of it. Unless we are aware of the foundation of our life that is the soul or Atman, the problem of emptiness cannot be solved.

And it is not enough to be aware of this, but we have to remain connected ourselves with this Atman. In fact, we are always connected with it but are not aware of it. For that, we should know what is the soul and how I am connected with it. At the micro level of life, we call it soul or Atman, and at the macro level, we call it God or Brahman. We have to become aware of our connections with the souls in us or God or Brahman, which are eternal. We get frustration and disappointment in life because we focus on things which are non-eternal. And non-eternal things are always

changing, fluctuating, so from that eternal satisfaction cannot come. Unless we feel connected with the eternal, we cannot have steady mental peace and happiness.

Another idea related to fulfilment in life is this: we have some basic desires, basic urges. Everyone wants to survive for a continued period, no one wants to die. Next, we want to gain knowledge and want to know various things to satisfy our curiosity. That's why we study books, read magazines, newspapers, watch TV, surf the internet. All of these are done to satisfy our desire to know. Then the third thing is, everyone wants joy, without exception. Fourthly, everyone wants to love and to be loved. And fifthly, to be able to fulfil these desires, we want to work. So, these are the five motivations behind what we do and think in our life. If we analyse anybody's life, we will find these five basic urges in common.

Now, if it is asked what fulfilment is, we may also reply, if these basic urges are fulfilled our life becomes fulfilled. But what happens? Though we want to live eternally we know we must die. Then we may know many things, but if we compare between the amount that we know, and that we don't know, then the amount of things not known to us will always be much greater. Newton, who was widely recognised as one of the greatest mathematicians and physicists and among the most influential scientists of all time, once said, "I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me."

Socrates was declared as the wisest man in Greece in an Oracle. Socrates pondered over it and concluded that there are many things which he don't know, but other people are not even aware that they don't know. That's why, may be, he was declared the wisest person in Greece. Then another fact is that, even though people especially, scholars know many things one basic thing they do not know, that is, "Who am I". They know so many things about others, but they do not know or even try to know who they are. For example, the psychiatrists are occupied in analysing other people's minds, but it may be reasonably questioned to what extent they know about their own mind.

We all want joy, but as we get experiences in life, we understand that the amount of joy is much less than the amount of sufferings. Suppose, the amount of joy is ten grams, the amount of suffering is perhaps one kilogram. But for the hope of getting these mere ten grams of happiness, we continue to live and don't mind any amount of troubles and tribulations.

Then Love. We all want to love and want to be loved. But at one point, this love starts waning, because the subject and the object of love are always changing. So if the subject and object of love changes, the amount of love also will change. If there is attraction today, then one day there may be also repulsion. Many examples are there where attraction turned into repulsion.

Now the question is, why things happen in that way though we do not want it? We spend so much time and energy to fulfil these basic desires, then why do we face disappointment and frustration? The plain answer is, we are striving to fulfil those basic desires in the wrong way. Hence, we should know what is the correct and proper way of striving? The proper way is to realise our Self. Why so? Because the nature of the Self is *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss absolute. So if we really want to fulfil our wish of eternal survival, highest knowledge, and to experience absolute joy, one way of which is to live and be loved, it is possible by realising our real Self. That is the spiritual way which is the only correct way to experience absolute joy. All other ways are bound to fail, because all other things are bound to change and decay.

To explain it a little more, if we want to live eternally, we have to live in the plane of spirit not at the level of the body. The spirit will not die, it is eternal. Once we identify ourselves with the Self, which is eternal, then we can live eternally. In the Upanishads there is an episode in which a Guru asks his disciple, do you know that thing, by knowing which you know everything? The answer is, by knowing the Atman, we know everything as the Atman is all pervading. If we know one lump of gold, we can know everything which is made of gold. However, though Atman pervades everything its manifestation is not same everywhere. In some cases, it is more visible, whereas in some cases it is not.

Now, let us consider the case of love. Everyone wants that their love would last. But mostly, secular love starts growing, reaches its climax after which it starts waning. But if God is the object of love, such love will keep growing. Moreover, by loving God, we get intense and limitless joy, and also love of God makes us free. That is the ideal of love. Again, why should we love others? Because Atman or God exists in all people. It is because God or Atman is in everyone, that we feel attraction to others. But when we love an individual, then it becomes limited and temporary. Instead of that if we make God the object of our love, then because He is eternal and infinite our love will also become eternal and limited.

What about loving our family members? Does our love for God mean that that we shall have no love for our family members? That is not the case. We should love our family members through God. That means, we should connect our relatives and family members to God or Atman. The husband is not only a husband, the wife is not only a wife, and the children are not only our children, but God is manifested as our parents, our husband, wife or children. In that way, a secular love can be transformed spiritual love bringing joy and freedom in our life.

Another way of explaining the fulfilment of life is as follows. We have our physical body, our mind, our intelligence, and our spirit. We can say our life will be fulfilled if we develop our life in all these aspects: Physical health, mental health, intellectual life, spiritual life. From all these aspects, let us here focus on spiritual life.



We mentioned earlier that we should build up our spiritual life by knowing our Atman, the substratum of our life, the core of our personality and that by realising the nature of Atman our life will be fulfilled. But the basic question is how to develop our inner life, our spiritual life, how to know the Atman/the Brahman/God? The answer is if we live our life according to one or a combination of the four Yogas namely, Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga about which you have more or less some idea— then our life will be fulfilled.

In the beginning, I had asked you questions on how our life can be fulfilled, and you also gave your answers to that question. However, my answer is, if we know our Self or Atman, in other words Brahman or God, our life will be fulfilled. In the Upanishads it has been said, *Atmanam Viddhi*, that is, know thy Self. Sri Ramakrishna, prophet of the modern age, also said the similar thing, that is, realisation of God is the main purpose of life. Because only by that, we can have fulfilment in life as the Atman or God is the eternal and infinite peace and joy, knowledge and freedom.

The following is an interview with Swami Medhasananda which was published in Anjali – the magazine of the Bengali Association of Tokyo in Japan.

Fulfilling the desire of Swami Vivekananda “to do something for Japan.”

An excerpt from the interview of Swami Medhasananda Maharaj for ‘Anjali.’

The interview was conducted by Mr. Ranjan Gupta & Mr. Sanjib Chanda.

*A theme that had been decided upon for Anjali during this current year was the 70th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and India, and in this context, numerous commemorative events are being conducted in both nations. The fortification of diplomatic relations between the two nations is an issue in requirement of persistent effort at diverse individual and non-governmental levels, and this is a truth of which we are all aware. The fact that the successive attempts made so far in order to enhance the people-to-people relationship between the two nations need to be truly acknowledged and conceded, is a matter of paramount significance. The manner whereby individuals and groups relentlessly promoted this goal while toiling unnoticed behind the scenes, is a fact not easily grasped by the common man, who has a tendency to judge situations purely as they appear on the surface. A deeper insight into the situation is essential, if one desires to realize how humans as well as non-governmental organizations are already playing a role behind the scenes, generating a long-lasting impact. As regards the reinforcement of bonds between India and Japan, when we got down to pondering over noteworthy non-governmental organizations – the first name that arose within our minds was the **Nippon Vedanta Kyokai**. Since the Kyokai for long had provided invaluable service in Japan, we deemed it vital that many more come to know of it and judged it fitting to cover the story of the NVK in Anjali. Our basic aim was to probe the issue as to how the NVK commenced its journey, and how as a spiritual organization it has contributed towards the forging of cultural and spiritual relationships over the years, between India and Japan. With this frame of mind, we approached Swami Medhasananda Maharaj of the Nippon Vedanta Kyokai.*

Gautam

Well, Maharaj, on behalf of the Anjali Magazine, may we request you as the head and resident monk to give us a brief introduction to your society and its various contributions?

Maharaj

First of all, let me clarify the fact that many people do not know the real identity of the Nippon Vedanta Kyokai. In English it is referred to as the **Vedanta Society of Japan**, and here again many do not know that it is the one and only branch of the Ramakrishna Mission in Japan, with its headquarters in India. In many countries outside India there are branches of the Ramakrishna Mission, and most of them are known as the Vedanta Society. Why is this so? It is because many people may not know Sri Ramakrishna, but they (those who have an interest in India), know something about Vedantic philosophy. That is the reason why the Ramakrishna Mission branches located outside India are known as the Vedanta Society. Vedanta is one of the oldest of India's philosophies, and it is universal. This philosophy has been exemplified in the current age in the lives of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Spreading the message of Vedanta in the light of the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda is the goal of the centers of the Ramakrishna Mission worldwide, and as a matter of fact, the Vedanta society of Japan too has the same objective.

The readers of Anjali, who are mostly Indians, do not need much of an introduction to the Ramakrishna Mission. They already have some knowledge about the Ramakrishna Mission. Before I get into this question-and-answer session concerning the contribution made by the society, let me read out a relevant quotation from the works of Swami Vivekananda. Around as early as 1897, he made the following significant remark: "*Certainly it is desirable to establish a connection between India and Japan.*" We need to bear in mind the fact that this remark of his was made in 1897, and much later, after about 20 years, Rabindranath Tagore the eminent poet and pioneer of the India-Japan relationship, visited Japan for the first time. People know a great deal about Tagore's relationship to Japan and Japan's relationship to Tagore, but very few are aware of the fact that Swami Vivekananda realized it much earlier. As I have already quoted, "it is very desirable to establish a connection between India and Japan." So the critical point to note here is that it was Swami Vivekananda's wish to build a relationship between India and Japan, and that is what we are striving for.

As you know, diplomatic relations with other countries, if not based on the people-to-people relationship, become superficial. Hence, they should be based on a firm foundation of

an inter-personal relationship, and regarding that, government organizations cannot do much. It is mostly private and voluntary organizations that play vital roles in establishing such relationships. In addition, such relationships should be promoted by mutual effort. That is to say, both Indian and Japanese voluntary organizations should work towards the same objective.

We shall now examine the issue as to how Swamiji's wish to establish a bond between India and Japan is being fulfilled by our Society. In this context I also wish to quote another remark of Swamiji's, a remark he uttered on the very last day of his mortal existence, (he departed this life on July 4, 1902). He said, "*I want to do something for Japan.*" This was a very significant remark. Why did he make this remark? He did so because Okakura Tenshin, a celebrated Japanese art historian, had just visited India, and a key purpose behind his visit was to invite Swamiji to Japan. At that time he had no knowledge of the Tagore family or other eminent Indians. Yet, he had come to know of Swamiji from a close American devotee of his, who had visited Japan and studied art with Okakura. Okakura desired to invite Swamiji to Japan, to deliver talks for the spiritual regeneration of the Japanese.

Another Buddhist monk by name Tokumo Oda also arrived in India for the same purpose, and coincidentally Okakura and Oda happened to be friends. The Meiji emperor too had extended an invitation to Swamiji to visit Japan through the Japanese consul stationed in Bombay, but as Swamiji was ultimately unable to sail to Japan due to ill health, something else began to work within his mind. Although the Japanese people were very keen on his visit, yet due to his ill health he finally did not succeed in fulfilling it. All these issues were perhaps bothering his mind at that time, and that is possibly the reason why he made the comment, "I must do something for Japan." I personally have a firm conviction that Swamiji is fulfilling his final wish through us, that is, through our Society, and all our activities ought to be perceived via this angle. Through us, Swamiji is realizing his own desires from another plane of existence, and we are merely serving as his instruments.

(To be continued in the next issue ...)

Some Photos from Kali Puja





• Thought of the Month •

रघुकुल रीत सदा चली आई, प्राण जाए पर वचन न जाई |

Raghu kul reet sadaa chali aayi, praan jay par vachan na jaai

This has been passed down for long in the clan of Raghu,
It is more honorable to lose your life in keeping your promise, than to break your promise.

• Story to Remember •

A Sacrifice Greater than Yudhishtira's Ashvamedha

When Yudhishtira was crowned as king after the Kurukshetra battle, he performed an Ashvamedha yajna. The yajna was completed in great splendor. The brahmins and poor people received bounteous gifts. From somewhere unseen, a mongoose appeared and after rolling on the ground, laughed out in derision. Half of his body was all shining gold. He spoke to all the princes and learned brahmins who had gathered from various countries:

“You all no doubt believe that you have completed your yajna in splendid style. With your horse sacrifice and the great gifts made. Pray, be not so vain about it. Once upon a time, a poor brahmin made a gift of a pound of maize flour. Your gifts are as of nothing compared to the gift made by the brahmin. Listen to my story, which is a true account of what I saw myself.

“A brahmin lived with his wife, son and daughter-in-law. Once a great drought came and there was famine all over the land. For many days the brahmin and his family starved. One day, they managed to get a small quantity of maize. They ground it and after saying their prayers they divided the flour into four equal parts and offering thanks to God, sat down eagerly to eat.

“Just then, a guest arrived, and he was exceedingly hungry. The pure souled brahmin and his family were delighted to have the good fortune to have a guest. The brahmin offered his portion of food to the guest. The guest ate it quickly but was still hungry when he had finished. Seeing his hungry and unsatisfied look, the wife offered her share. And then the son and the daughter-in-law too offered their shares to satisfy the guest's hunger. After receiving the last portion and eating it too, the guest was satisfied. He thanked the family and left. That night, the brahmin's family all died of starvation.

“I had seen the great sacrifice. And I rolled my body in some of the grains of maize which were on the floor. They could cover only half of my body which immediately turned into gold. Since that day, desirous of getting my other half made of gold, I have been trying every place where men perform great yajnas and sacrifices. I heard the great King Yudhishtira was performing a yajna and came here. But this sacrifice too was not as great as the one the poor brahmin made for his guest.” The mongoose then disappeared.

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