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# The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN



## Thus Spake

No one can change the direction of the wind, but one can adjust the sails to reach the destination.

- Shri Ramchandra

Only two kinds of people can attain self-knowledge: those who are not encumbered at all with learning, that is to say, whose minds are not overcrowded with thoughts borrowed from others; and those who, after studying all the scriptures and sciences, have come to realise that they know nothing.

- Sri Ramakrishna

To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.

- Lewis B. Smedes

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# Monthly Program Schedule for May 2024

4th (Sat)

**Bhagavad Gita Study Class at the Indian Embassy**

10:30 ~ 12:00

(Japanese Only) (Video Uploaded Later)

19th (Sun)

**Monthly Retreat at Zushi / Lord Buddha Celebration**

10:30 ~ 16:30

Livestreaming

Speaker: Revered Hayashi Jisho, Head Priest, Shichizawa Kannonji

## Sri Ramakrishna Birthday Celebration Discourse

Swami Medhasananda

Sri Ramakrishna is known as the God-man of India in the present Age. We know God, We know man, but when we combine these two, some people may find it confusing.

Godman is concretised God in a human form for example, Lord Buddha and Jesus Christ. Godmen are also called Incarnation of God

Why is God born as man? His birth is not governed by the law of Karma, as in other human beings. They are born by their own sweet will. Of course, they have a mission- to show the path of joy, peace, knowledge to the suffering human beings. And, it is His responsibility to show the path, because, He is the creator of the world. Again, we can love God through Him. It is difficult to identify oneself with an abstract God, but it is easier to identify oneself with God with a human form.

What are the characteristics of Sri Ramakrishna's life and message? First of all, His life authenticates the message that God is not a myth. God is not an imagination of ignorant, self-seeking superstitious people, but God is a reality. He also authenticates that all religions lead to the same goal- that is realisation of God. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism- all lead to the same goal- realisation of God. This conclusion is not done intellectually, but this is based on realisation. That is why, Sri Ramakrishna made a profound comment- As many faiths, so many paths of God realisation.

Sri Ramakrishna's message also substantiates that, the only way to get peace in spite of peacelessness in and around us, the only way to get abiding joy, the only way to solve all problems of life is Realisation of God.

In the Upanishads, there is a beautiful verse:

*Shrinwantu vishwe amritasya putra/aye dhamani divyani tashtu/vedahametam purusham mahantam/aditya varanam tamasa parastat/tvameva vidithva ati mriyu meti/nanyah pantha vidyathe ayanaya*

There are many atheists, eminent professor who write scholastic articles and books to prove that there is no God. Fine, but at the same time, they don't show the way to get mental peace. It is easy to prove logically that there is no God, but they cannot show any alternative way about how to get peace amidst peacelessness. How to solve all the problems related to life. To demolish something is easy, but to construct something is very difficult. Through ages many experiments have been made, but there is no other way to get abiding mental peace, abiding joy, supreme knowledge except having faith in God and calling on Him. Therefore still now, Sri Krishna's message, Buddha's message, Christ's message is so effective to bring peace in the lives of million and millions of people.

Sri Ramakrishna during his lifetime showed the way to peace and joy and he granted liberation to many. He trained Swami Vivekananda to spread His message- the message of Vedanta across the world-- the message of Vedanta as exemplified in his life.

He sowed the seeds of a monastic order, named Ramakrishna Order by creating a band of monastics who were illumined souls, and this Order worked for the liberation of oneself and to serve the suffering humanity. 'Atmanah Mokshartam, Jagad Hitaya cha'. These are the twin principles based on which the Ramakrishna Order has been established. The Indians have a fair idea, how the Ramakrishna Mission has been serving sick people, poor people, tribal people through around 200 centres in India. Unfortunately, most of the foreigners have absolutely no idea about how the Ramakrishna Mission has been serving in India. Now because of the Internet, it is easy to search, so you yourself can search and find out about the activities of the Ramakrishna Mission. So, I request you, if you have not done yet, to search the Internet and know about the services of the Ramakrishna Mission. .

Sri Ramakrishna left Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi to give emphasis on the Motherhood aspect of women. His chosen deity was Mother Kali. His tantrik Guru was Bhairavi Brahmani, a woman saint. Though he was established in utmost renunciation, he allowed Holy Mother Sarada Devi, her spiritual consort, to stay with Him. He trained her to demonstrate the Motherhood aspect of women. It doesn't matter if a woman has given birth to a child or not, but every woman can manifest this trait, that is Motherhood in her life.

Sri Ramakrishna also designated Sri Mahendranath Gupta, better known as Sri Ma, professionally a teacher, to record his most precious spiritual teachings. When he visited Sri Ramakrishna, he recorded the conversations of Sri Ramakrishna in a diary. After coming from back home from the school where he taught, he would sit with pen and paper and recollect from his memory what he had heard Sri Ramakrishna say. He said sometimes it would take him 3 to 4 hours or sometimes more than that to write them down. That is why, the record of Sri Ramakrishna's message by M, is so genuine and authentic.

Why I am saying M was designated for recording His message is, once Swami Shivananda, another direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, during his visit to Sri Ramakrishna, was looking intently at Him, as if trying to remember every word that he was speaking. Sri Ramakrishna observed this, and asked for the reason. He found that Shivanandaji was also recording the conversation which happened on that day. Sri Ramakrishna said, this task is not meant for you. Already another person has been designated for this task. Shivanandaji threw the papers, in which he had recorded the conversations into the Ganga. The title of the original book in Bengali is 'Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita'. The nectar like words of Sri Ramakrishna, if we translate it literally into English. It was first published in five volumes. The word Kathamrita has been coined from Srimad Bhagavatam one of the old scriptures of India. There is a verse in the Bhagavatam:

तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनं कविभिरीडितं कल्मषापहम् ।

श्रवणमङ्गलं श्रीमदाततं भुवि गृणन्ति ये भूरिदा जनाः ॥ ९ ॥

*tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam kavibhirīḍitaṁ kalmaṣāpaham*  
*śravaṇa-maṅgalaṁ śrīmad ātataṁ bhuvi gṛṇanti ye bhūri-dā janāḥ*

In the Bengali language, as one would expect, there are many kinds of books, novels, story books, poetry etc. Even now, the bestselling book among all these books is the Kathamrita. When the copyright of the book expired, many publishers published this book. However, all the prints brought out by the publishers were exhausted.

M was headmaster of a school and he also used to teach in different schools, sometimes two hours, sometimes three hours. Then he himself founded a school and became a rector in that. He introduced this book in his own school founded by him and included it in the syllabus. Some people would criticise that to promote the sale of the book, M has introduced this book in his school. M did know about this criticism but would not be puturbed. However, M said, these young students who read this book may not understand the value of it now but when they grow up, earn money, get married and have children and thus face the hard realities of life only at that time they will realize the great value of Kathamrita for bringing peace amidst all calamities of life.

Once while Swami Brahmananda was visiting a place in the then East Bengal one youngman wanted his sister to meet him and get some valuable advices from him, but could not get any chance to do that. Finding no other way, the boy took his sister to the railway station from where Maharaj would board the train. The train was just about to depart when they met him.. Swami Brahmananda said to his sister, "My daughter, there is no more time to give you a long spiritual discourse, I just give you on piece of spiritual advise, very briefly, and that is, read the 'Kathamrita' daily. And that will bring fulfilment in your life."

So, those of who have assembled here have no problems or troubles, and your life is full of peace and joy you need not read the Kathamrita. But, if you feel that life is burdensome, t life is not a bed of roses as once it appeared to be and it is infested with thorns hence you want to know how to get mental peace how to solve the problems of life and how to bring fulfilment in your life then please read at least one book that will successfully navigate you in

the tumultuous ocean of your life and bring fulfilment and that is 'Kathamrita'- the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.

## **Visit of an Indian group to the Kyokai on 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2024- Report and Photos**

I am Neeharika and I have been residing in Tokyo for about 18 years with my family. Srinath Satya murthy san taught Vishnu sahasranamam for our group of 10 families . During our spiritual discussions he told us about the Ramakrishna Aasramam and the rituals performed there. We then expressed our desire to visit the holy place immediately. On the occasion of Sarada Mata birthday celebration, we visited for the first time.

This was my first time ever visiting the Ramakrishna Aasramam. We felt very fortunate and happy to visit such a blissful place. We participated in puja, had lunch and listened to Swamiji's speech about the holy mother Sarada Mata.

Recently, all of us the students of Srinath san visited the Aasramam for the second time. Swamiji welcomed us all and spent a lot of his precious time with us . We chanted Vishnu sahasranamam with Swamiji and had maha Prasadam. Swamiji then taught us many spiritual aspects, including the importance of meditation and suggested some very good books for all us to follow. We also had a Q&A session with Swamiji and he enlightened us on the issues raised by each of us. He insisted us to spend some time on Meditation every day without fail. We started practicing the leanings and teachings from Swamiji. We plan to visit Aashram regularly to enhance our knowledge and wisdom.

We are now Looking forward to visiting the Aasramam as often as we can.

From,

Neeharika, Appaji



# Photos from Sri Ramakrishna's Birthday Celebrations in March





# Photos from Swami Vivekananda's Birthday Celebrations





• Thought of the Month •

"If a young man does not go to church, he ought to be condemned. But if an old man goes to church, he also ought to be condemned; he has no business with this child's play any more; the church should have been merely a preparation for something higher. What business has he any more with forms and Pratikas and all these preliminaries?"

- Swami Vivekananda

• Story to Remember •

## Whoever Takes the Son...

An ultra wealthy man shared his passion for art collecting with his devoted young son. Together they traveled around the world, adding fine treasures to their collection.

But then the world went to war, and the young man left to serve his country. After only a few short weeks, his father received a telegram that pulled the earth beneath his feet. It read that his son had been killed while carrying a fellow soldier to safety.

His days became longer and life unbearable as he grieved and mourned the death of his son.

One day on a snowy winter morning, someone knocked on his door. It was a soldier with a large package in his hand.

“I am the one your son died rescuing,” the visitor said and handed the gift to the old man. “I am not much of an artist but I wanted to give you this gift on Christmas.”

The man unwrapped the package and broke into tears. Unlike the Picasso and Monet on the wall, this would be an unremarkable painting to everyone else in the world, but him. There it was, his son’s portrait. Those kind eyes, that youthful appearance, as if he would walk out of the frame any moment and give his father a hug. As days passed, this became his most prized possession.

The following spring, the old man passed away after a brief illness. As per his will, his estate and everything in it was readied for auction. Various rich enthusiasts, loaded with pride and possessions, were eyeing different pieces of art from his vast collection.

“The will explicitly states that the auction must begin with the deceased’s most favorite painting,” the auctioneer announced. “The portrait of his son.”

A hush fell over the room. In the world of the art collectors, no one in their sane mind would want a painting by an unknown artist.

“Who will open the bidding with \$100?” the auctioneer said.

No one responded and a minute later the attendees shifted in their chairs impatiently. They told him to first auction the other famous pieces but the auctioneer reminded them that the portrait of the son had to be sold first.

Finally, a friend of the old man stepped forward, “I knew the boy. He died serving the country. So, I’d like to bid \$100 for the portrait.”

“I have a bid for \$100,” called the auctioneer. “Will anyone go higher?”

“Going once,” he hollered after several moments of silence. “Going twice. Gone.” And the gavel fell.

Cheers filled the room as some in the relieved audience said that it was time to get on with the real auction.

“The auction is over,” the auctioneer announced to the stunned audience with the executor of the will standing next to him.

“The will unequivocally states,” he continued. “Whoever takes the son, gets it all.”

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