



November 2015 - Volume 13 Number 11

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

December Calendar

Birthdays

**Swami
Premananda**
Saturday, Dec 19

Christmas Eve
Thursday, Dec 24

Kyokai Events

• Bhagavad Gita •

Indian Embassy Tokyo
5th Saturday (photo ID)
日本語 Only/14:00 ~16:00

• Yoga Asana •

Sundays Zushi Annexe
6th, 13th, 20th
14:00-15:30pm
Please Contact: Zushi

• Zushi Retreat •

Sunday 20 December
10:30~16:30
Morning Session/Talk
Lunch Prasad
Afternoon Session

• Upanishad •

Indian Embassy Tokyo
19th Saturday (photo ID)
日本語 Only/14:00 ~16:00

• Christmas Eve •

Thursday 24 December
19:00~21:00
Worship / Reading
Discourse / Carols
Light Prasad Dinner
Please contact: Zushi

• Nara Narayan • **CANCELLED**

**See page 12 for more
EVENTS and details!**

✧ Thus Spake ✧

“Even the injunctions of destiny are cancelled if one takes refuge in God. Destiny strikes off with her own hands what she had written about such a person.”

- Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid.”

- Jesus, the Christ

September Zushi Retreat 2015

“Challenges to Spiritual Life”

Part 3 - The Dichotomy of Spiritual Life

Part 1 of this talk by Swami Medhasananda was published in the June edition of ‘The Vedanta Kyokai’ and is available on our web site, as is Part 2 presented in the October edition.

“In Part One and Part Two of our discussion on the ‘Challenges to Spiritual Life’ we talked at length on ‘loving the ideal,’ then ‘self-analysis and introspection,’ ‘discrimination,’ ‘austerity,’ ‘purity,’ ‘samskara’ and ‘truthfulness.’ In ending Part 2 we discussed the elimination of the ego, or how to eliminate the ego.

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Challenges (from page 1)

“Today I would like to discuss the ‘Dichotomy of Spiritual Life’ or the conflicts in pursuing a spiritual life. What is the dichotomy? Devotees spend time in the morning hours practising at home at their shrine before going to work. When they get up from practise and go to work, however, they forget about God. They become completely oblivious of God during their work, and for some people the rest of their day is spent in secular thought and activities. There is no connection with God or thoughts of God.

Moral Values and Calmness of Mind

“Many people are happy in dividing their lives into these two parts; spiritual life, which is part-time, and secular life, which is full-time. But for those who are serious about pursuing a spiritual life, their confusion and challenge is in how to combine their secular life and spiritual life. They cannot do away with their jobs, because they must maintain themselves or their family, but at the same time, these devotees love to think about God; love to pray to God; and they want to become spiritual. So the question is how to combine these two.

“Only the other day one young, intelligent, Japanese girl came and asked me this very question. She explained that she really loved spirituality and really loved God, but at the same time she had to work. She also said that she had some ambition in her secular life and career as well, and often found difficulties in combining her ambition and career with spiritual life and love of God. Saying this had become a real problem for her, she asked me to suggest how to combine the two.

“The answer is that it is not just a question of time, nor is it just a question of stress. It is not because we have to work long hours that we become stressful. It is because at the same time in our work we sometimes have to compromise our moral values. For example, a client may come and she has to give some advice to that client that she knows is not

really the best advice, but she is obligated by her work to promote sales. So the advice she gives compromises some moral or ethical values.

“For our meditation in spiritual life we need calmness of mind, but when we work long hours that calmness is disturbed. In fact, a lot of restlessness is the result of such work. So adhering to moral values, maintaining calmness of mind; to become free from anger; to become free from jealousy, these are all great challenges when one has to lead a work-life. So we become confused as to what to do. As such, one has to decide on a preference to a spiritual life or to a secular life. If we decide that the goal of our life is spiritual illumination, then we should not do a job that will not allow us reach our spiritual goal. We must not accept a job that compromises our moral values, or we should limit our ambition. It may be that we cannot get promotions, because to please the boss we must make some special effort that compromises our ethics to get promoted.

Limiting Ambitions

“So we must become satisfied with somewhat ordinary standard of living. It may not be as high as possible, but we must be satisfied with it. Let me give one example: One young Indian devotee was employed by a Japanese company and came to Japan with his young family. He got a very handsome salary, but for that salary he had to work very hard and late hours daily. After one or two years of this life he realised that his family life and relationships were suffering, because he could not give any time or attention to his wife or child. At the weekend he was exhausted and only wanted rest, so then too, he could not devote any time to his family. As we know, this is a very common problem in Japan. So what he did was to say to management that he wanted to return home earlier and did not want to continue to work after 6PM, because his family was more important to him than work. His manager then said that in order to do so, his salary would be reduced. To which

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Challenges (from page 2)

he replied that he would not mind such a reduction, provided it allowed him to continue an ordinary standard of living.

“So in addition to moral values, there are other dimensions to consider with regard to one’s work. One’s family life and relationships are very important, too. This man accepted the new situation and is happy with the outcome. He is paying more attention to his wife and his child and there is more peace and harmony in the family. Thus he enjoys more mental peace with fewer complaints from his wife and child. So the most important thing is to decide what the salary is for. Surely we use it to get joy? If we have no time to enjoy it, what is it for? Hence, if we want to combine these two lives, spiritual life and your secular or job life, then we have to satisfy an ordinary standard of living.

“Even under these circumstances—by limiting our ambitions and giving more importance to our spiritual life and spiritual ideals, we can still become quite successful in life. Can you give me an example of someone who became very famous? Such an example can be found in Abraham Lincoln. President Abraham Lincoln was most ideal among all American

presidents, because he never compromised his moral or spiritual principles. This was the message of his life, as was that of Mahatma Gandhi. So it is possible to hold to moral and spiritual ideals and yet become very successful in our work lives. It is not easy, of course, and we have to make a lot of sacrifices, but, finally, with effort it is possible to solve this dichotomy of spiritual life and secular life.

“As I said, however, it is not easy and we have to make some sacrifices. Some challenging situations will arise, but if you just surrender to such challenges and compromise your moral and ethical values, you cannot be successful in spiritual life. Some people are happy with this outcome, but we are talking about the real challenges of spiritual life. If you really want to lead a spiritual life, there is no other way, you must accept these challenges and make sacrifices.

Work as Worship

“Our next problem is how one remembers God during work, because work continues for long periods of time. In pursuing a spiritual life this is something that can be very confusing and uncomfortable for the aspirant who wants to think of God even during work.

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Challenges (from page 3)

“How can we achieve this? The best answer is to try to do karma as karma yoga, and work as yoga. Swami Vivekananda has given talks and discourses on this topic that have been published as a book titled, ‘Karma Yoga’. The very theme of this book is how to get spiritual illumination through work.

“For many people it is not possible to meditate for long periods of time as explained in Raja Yoga. Nor is it easy to practise discrimination between the real and the unreal and focus on reality as prescribed by Jnana Yoga. Nor do we have so much time for worship and prayer as recommended by Bhakti Yoga, because our work consumes most of our time. So is spiritual illumination a closed door for us? Can we not attain spiritual illumination? In order to reach spiritual illumination, are we to give up our family and work and become a monk or a nun? Must we go to a cave or a forest, or enter a monastery or convent? Is it essential for any of us living in a house with a family and a day to day job to give up all to get spiritual illumination? These are the questions asked by millions and especially by devotees who really want some spiritual illumination.

“If you think of work as worship, then work becomes prayer to God. Work is not just work, it’s also prayer to God through work. If we really understand this point, illumination even in an active life is possible. The most emphasis in the Bhagavad Gita we find placed on the way to spiritual illumination is Karma Yoga.

[Swami Medhasananda then asks if anyone can tell him the gist of Sri Krishna’s teachings in the Gita and the greatest single piece of advice given to Arjuna? One attendee answers: “You have a right to perform your work, but you are not entitled to the fruits of this work, and, secondly, all one’s work should be performed as an offering to God.” Another replies: “Surrender yourself to Me.” Yet another adds: “Do your work and leave the result to God.” Lastly someone repeated the first point and added, “... whenever unethical values

prevail in society, then I (Krishna) will appear again and again to save the world.”]

“The central teaching of Lord Krishna to Arjuna, a warrior, is ‘mām anusmara yudhya ca’ or ‘remember Me always and fight.’ ‘Always’ is the part we sometimes forget, because we sometimes remember, but we do not always remember. It is then that we fall into trouble. So what we need to do is to keep one part of our mind constantly connected to God, and the other with our work. ‘Yudhya ca’ would mean ‘and fight.’ Well, a salaryman doesn’t really need to actually fight, that is for soldiers and the police. No, ‘fight’ here symbolises the activities of one’s daily work. This is the gist of the Bhagavad Gita: ‘mām anusmara yudhya ca.’ As Sri Ramakrishna said very beautifully, ‘Do your work with one hand and touch the feet of the Lord with the other.’ How beautifully He put it. We have two hands; with one do our work and with the other hand touch the feet of God, meaning, remember God. When our work is finished, or after retirement; during prayer or meditation time, we can touch the feet of God with both hands.

“How to do this? It is not easy, but there is a method to finally achieve this. Firstly, we must think that our work is not just work, but a service to God. We must understand that this work is not just work, it is worship. As Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) would often say, ‘Work is worship.’ Next we need an ‘instrument attitude,’ meaning that we shall do this work as an instrument of God. The third point is egolessness; it is not my talent; it is not my power, all the talent and power comes from God. There is a very famous song in Bengali that says to Mother Kali everything is Hers, ‘Mother I am the machine, you are the mechanic; I am the cart, you are the driver; I am the house, you are the indweller; I do as you make me do.’ So we must practise this attitude.

Surrender Results to God

“The fourth and most important thing in the practise of Karma Yoga is to do our best. Exert yourself as much as possible, and ‘leave

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Challenges (from page 4)

no stone unturned.’ Try in every way to achieve success —‘Isshokenmei’ or ‘with the utmost effort,’ as we say in Japan, with the talent and power received from God, but for the result or success, depend on God. Be satisfied with the result, and offer that work to God, as well. Suppose we succeed, then all is well, but if we fail what shall we do? First of all, if we do not depend on God, lots of stress and worries will arise between the outcome of success or failure. We can eliminate this stress by depending on God. Importantly, with this attitude we can accept God’s outcome of failure or success gracefully. We will neither be too overjoyed nor too upset with the result.

“This is the problem with the works of ordinary people; with success comes pride and ego that affects their next work, and with failure they are totally upset. So the most important effect is that we can avoid these two extremes, which are not good for our mental calmness. This will also help us to consider our next steps of work with more calmness. Think of company executives, do they not have to face this situation again and again? Can they afford extended celebrations of successes or extended periods of frustration? They have to move on to the next project, and do it with full attention. Wallowing in either extreme will prevent us from taking on the next task with thoughtful calmness. In a business enterprise, if we credit all successes to our talents and skills alone, we discredit all the contributions of others! That’s why this is so important.

“So it is better to depend on God for the result, and surrender whatever result comes to God and be satisfied. But if there is a failure and you believe you should try again, do it! One failure doesn’t mean we should accept failure. So try it again, but only if you are convinced that you should. Some introspection may be necessary on how and whether or not one should proceed. All this can be done with calmness of mind. We cannot do this being overly exuberant with success or struck down with sadness and

shock with failure. With this practice can properly channel our emotions and calmly and properly proceed with the right attitude.

Practise Rememberance

“So let me repeat the steps again. Firstly, do work as worship—God, this is your work. Secondly, work as an instrument of God knowing all intelligence and power come from God. Thirdly, exert yourself as much as possible for success, but for the result, depend on God. Fourthly, accept the results, whatever they are, gracefully and surrender it to God. If there is a failure, try again if necessary.

“There is a fifth point, as well, and that is before each and every work think of God at least once, and when the job is completed think of God once again. Then too, on a work break remember God again. These three times are enough; once before, once during and once afterward.

“This is how we can practice Karma Yoga. If you are successful at these practices, then your remembrance of God will spontaneously increase more and more. With regular practise of the first four points the fifth becomes easy. If we say, ‘Lord this is your work ‘at the beginning of work, haven’t we remembered God? In worshipping through work, as well, we remember God. When we surrender the results of this work, do we not also remember God? So if we practise the first four points, then the fifth will be automatically taken care of.

“I would be happy if we all jot down these points and paste them up on our computer or workplace and go through them every day at the start of work. If you are successful at practising these points, I am sure that slowly your levels of stress alleviation will increase. At first maybe 20% of stress level will be alleviated, then from 30% to 70% and more. Eventually, you will not feel the burden of work and can maintain the equanimity of your mind at work. It is not the amount of work that makes us stressful, it is the wrong attitude toward work. The wrong mental

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Challenges (from page 5)

method makes us stressful. Be sure of this, with introspection you will find it is true.

“There is a difference when it comes to physical work. A carpenter is not so much stressful at the end of the day as he is tired. There is a difference between being stressed and being tired. If you are physically tired, take some rest and you will recover. If we are stressful, we cannot recover with some rest alone. Stress is more a mental matter. How often have you heard of a carpenter with a stress related mental disease? Do they often visit psychiatrists? No, when a carpenter is tired, he is physically exhausted. What makes us stressful is the wrong attitude toward work and the wrong method of working. When we are stressed it becomes really oppressive causing several problems. We become easily irritated. We become upset and lose our

temper over the smallest problem. This, finally, affects our relationship with our family and even affects our work in negative way.

“The Gita says that even a little practise of such Karma Yoga saves us from great danger and fear and is of great good to us. But who is listening? We have been reading what Sri Krishna has told us in the Bhagavad Gita for thousands of years, but how many of us practise? •

• Thought of the Month •

“Stand for something or you will fall for anything. Today's mighty oak is yesterday's nut that held its ground.”

- Rosa Parks

Devotees Visit India with Swami Medhasananda

Swami Medhasanandaji (Maharaj) took his annual home leave to India between 4 October and 7 November. About 15 devotees and friends took this opportunity to visit the country along with Maharaj, some spending about a week there and some staying for about two weeks until 20 October.

The party left Narita for Delhi where they spent a night. On the following day they viewed the famous Taj Mahal, a UNESCO World Heritage Site at Agra, on their way to Vrindavan, the holy site where Lord Krishna spent his childhood. The group stayed for three nights at the Vindraban Ramakrishna Mission and visited many

temples, old and new, Sri Krishna's birthplace Mathura and the Yamuna River.

Then the group moved on to Varanasi and stayed three nights at the Ramakrishna Mission in the city viewing a number of temples and going boating on the Ganges River.

Afterwards they went and stayed in the Mission's HQ Belur Math near Kolkata. From there we also visited places associated with Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda, such as Kamarpukur and Jayrambati. •



Arriving in Delhi: Negotiating Taxi Fares and visiting Delhi Ramakrishna Mission



In front of the Taj Mahal



Main gate facing Taj Mahal



Vindravan Old Temple



Camel Cart in Agra



Vrindavan Nursing School



Yamuna River



Ganga Ghat at Varansi



Varanasi from the Ganga



Japanese Temple at Sarnath



Prayers in the Old Mosque in Varanasi



In front of Swamiji's room, Belur Math



In front of Kali Temple Dakshineswar

Mr. Enrico Colombo shares his personal impressions and memories from a short pilgrimage to Delhi, Vindraban and Varanasi.

A Highly Blessed, if Short, Visit to India

Your reporter reached New Delhi airport at 3.00 o'clock in the morning on October 5, 2015. He had had a very difficult trip from the Philippines, as there was a strong typhoon in the vicinity of Hong Kong and flights had been heavily disrupted, with many thousands of passengers stranded at Hong Kong airport for many hours.

The gigantic immigration hall of Delhi airport at 3.00 o'clock in the morning offered an amazing scene: thousands of passengers crowded the immigration area as a great number of international flights had landed at Delhi airport around that time. However, immigration procedures did not take very long as there were numerous immigration officers working very hard to handle the horde of arriving passengers.

Anyway your reporter reached his hotel at 4.30 in the morning by way of a pre-paid taxi from the airport, which sped through the nearly deserted avenues of the city. No point in going to sleep then: better take a shower and walk the short distance from the hotel to the Delhi Ashram, where later he joined the group of about 15 Japanese devotees which had arrived in Delhi with Swami Medhasananda (Maharaj) of the Vedanta Society of Japan on the previous day. After a visit to the Shrine and pranams to the monks, all were ready to leave to Agra and Vindraban in three cars.

The trip to Agra did not take a long time since most of the distance is covered by a large and modern highway. We arrived there around noon and stopped at a Southern Indian restaurant for a very nice lunch, which included masala doza, lovely thin crepes made of rice flour wrapped around a tasty vegetarian filling. Refreshed by the nice meal we then started our visit to the Taj Mahal, a world famous, beautiful construction in white marble, adorned with gems of different types which glittered in the hot afternoon sunshine. We were accompanied by a guide who gave us a lot

of interesting information about the history of Taj Mahal and made the visit quite meaningful and successful.

We left Agra in mid-afternoon and reached the Vindraban Ramakrishna Mission in the early evening. Its large compound hosts a main shrine, monks' quarters and dining areas, and a guest house for visiting pilgrims, where we were accommodated. A large hospital, a nursing school, an accommodations building for nurses, and a large farm with a cowshed and numerous cows, are also part of the Mission compound. Roaming monkeys, too, are to be found there (and almost everywhere else in Vindraban) and more often than not they represent a bit of a nuisance.

The following morning, on October 6, Mangala Arati was followed by breakfast and soon after we left for a visit to different temples and places of interest accompanied by a kind young man acting as our tour leader and guide. Your reporter did take but sketchy notes about the several sites visited that morning: he mostly tried to focus on perceiving the feeling of those places where Sri Krishna and the Gopis had staged their famous 'Lila' (play) thousands of years ago.

Of the different places visited your reporter was particularly impressed by the castle and prison where Baby Krishna was born in Mathura. About Sri Krishna's prison cell and birth place your reporter has to admit to some personal doubts that that particular site might be exactly the historical place of His coming to this world. However, he did feel a palpable special atmosphere inside that cell. Whether this was the result of the vibrations of that Holy Birth or simply of the accumulated innumerable devotions of the millions of pilgrims and sadhus who have visited this site over the centuries, but in the end it mattered little.

In the evening of that day we visited a rather
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Blessed Visit (from page 9)

peculiar (in your reporter's view) modern temple dedicated to Sri Radha and Sri Krishna. This huge temple is located on a very extensive compound full of lights brightly illuminating different episodes of their Lila rendered under the form of colorful fiber-glass statues, some of them engineered to move around for more effect. Songs dedicated to Sri Radha and Sri Krishna are softly broadcast by loudspeakers all over the place.

The temple itself is heavily decorated with more statues and ornaments. A huge crowd roamed through the great expansion and seemed to fully enjoy the lighted displays and the temple. Your reporter has to confess that he did not feel any special spiritual stimulus there; nonetheless the place was certainly pleasant.

The next morning, October 7, we visited some more temples and places of interest, led by our kind and efficient guide. Your reporter remembers a nice, old temple located on the top of a hill and an old, hectic Shiva temple. This seemed to your reporter a bit too noisy for good concentration. Vendors were crowding its access offering different kinds of sweets and flowers for offerings and Prasad, and some kids were trying to impress visitors by displaying mean-looking snakes. Also, a few priests were loudly inviting devotees to avail of their prayerful services for some significant fees. Nonetheless, there was no doubt about the devotion of the pilgrims visiting the place.

We went then to visit a large pond associated to Swami Vivekananda and other disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. The pond is called Radhakund, your reporter believes, and the story goes that Swami Vivekananda took a swim in it leaving his loin cloth in the sunshine on its banks. It is said that a

monkey stole Swamiji's cloth. When Swamiji emerged from his bath he realized that the cloth had gone. He is said to have expressed feelingly his predicament to Sri Radha, when a man suddenly ran towards him out of nowhere and handed him new ochre robes. Vivekananda was very moved by the Lord's grace so promptly received. Later he returned to the Radhakund and found his own cloth in the exact place where he had left it before the monkey had taken it.

That afternoon a few other interesting visits took place. Your reporter remembers well the visit to the Yamuna River where we all dipped our feet in the holy water. We also visited a nearby building, recently acquired by the Mission, associated with Sri Sarada Devi's visit to Vindrabhan. There monkeys



struck again: one of them swiftly grabbed the eye-glasses of a devotee and ran away. Attempts to recover the booty by offering sugar candies or threats with a stick led to no result. We learned that eye-glasses are one of the favored targets of the monkeys: your

reporter witnessed another such mischief in a narrow lane of Vindrabhan this time affecting an Indian lady passing by.

We visited several other temples that afternoon and evening and your reporter keeps a fond memory of a large temple with big enthusiastic crowds chanting "Radhè-Radhè". Such sweet chanting is heard everywhere in Vindrabhan and surrounding areas and it is usually uttered joyfully in a rather loud voice (sometimes in a very loud voice).

Early the next morning, October 8, we visited the Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vindrabhan's large cowshed and farming area. Some cows were being milked with

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Blessed Visit (from page 10)

modern equipment. Your reporter was informed that some 80 liters of fresh milk are produced there daily.

The rest of the morning was dedicated to visiting the hospital and the nursing school which are part of the Vindraban Mission. A very kind and competent woman officer of the hospital led us through every area and gave us detailed and interesting information on how the hospital worked. It is very difficult to express in words the efforts offered by the hospital monks and personnel to treat the sick, regardless of their religion or financial solvency (or lack of it), trying to approach every patient with a holistic attitude in order to offer not only physical healing, but also mental and spiritual help.

The visit to the nursing school also impressed your reporter very much. Aspirant nurses are trained there for two years practically free of charge (with tuition and full board accommodation). In exchange for that, once they graduate, they serve at the hospital for a similar period at a reduced salary. After that they may choose to stay at the hospital or go to work somewhere else, including abroad, having attained full nursing qualifications. In the afternoon we took our leave from the very kind and hospitable monks of the Vindraban Mission and started our journey back to Delhi, where we reached in the afternoon, in time to attend evening Arati (vespers).

The day of October 9 started with the early morning Mangala Arati in the Delhi Shrine, in a very nice, peaceful atmosphere. The day had been left free for the devotees to do some sightseeing or otherwise. Your reporter spent the morning at the Ashram, buying some books at its bookshop, and chatting with different persons and monks who had approached him, probably noticing a strange foreigner enjoying his pacing back and forth in the garden in front of the Shrine.

After a tasty lunch at the Ashram your reporter ventured by himself to an area which had been indicated to him as fit for some shopping of small souvenir gifts to be

taken back to the Philippines to family and friends.

After evening Arati there was a sort of surprise outing to a Japanese restaurant. When we arrived there we realized that it was a rather high class place and accordingly pricey. We managed some affordable, simple Japanese vegetarian preparations, which were actually quite nice.

Our last day in Delhi started as usual with Mangala Arati. We had to be ready rather early in the morning to leave for the airport and board our Air India flight bound for Varanasi (Kashi). We reached there around noon and transferred to the Ramakrishna Mission there where we had lunch and were accommodated comfortably in a guest house.

Mid-afternoon we boarded a group of bicycle rickshaws and were transported to a spot near the sacred Ganga. A short walk through very narrow lanes took us to a ghat where a boat was waiting for us. We then enjoyed a lovely boat ride and had a panoramic view of some famous sites including the famous Manikarnika Ghat. Every now and then we alighted from the boat to visit some special place of interest.

Your reporter was impressed by the visits to a Muslim place of worship, where we set for a while and had a friendly conversation with some Muslim officers, and particularly by the visit to a small temple dedicated to Trailanga Swami, a famous Sadhu said to have lived over 200 years, whom Sri Ramakrishna visited in 1868. The boat ride had a glorious finale when we joined many dozens of other boats berthed one close to each other facing three adjoining ghats where evening vesper was being celebrated with great pomp in front of a crowd of thousands assembled on the steps. Lord Shiva Hymns were broadcasted over loudspeakers and priests performed Arati with offerings of fire, flowers and huge clouds of incense, whose fragrance was carried along by an evening breeze.

The next day, October 10, started at 3.00 o'clock in the morning when our group of

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Blessed Visit (from page 9)

pilgrims assembled at the entrance of the Varanasi Mission. Once again by bicycle rickshaw we reached the vicinity of the Ganga. There a short walk took us to Her banks. Some took a bath in the holy river and others, like your reporter, limited themselves to stepping in the water ankle-deep and spraying a little water on their heads and bodies.

After a short time, still very early in the morning, the whole group, led by Maharaj, another monk of the Varanasi Mission, and a priest, climbed the steep narrow lanes leading to the Vishwanatha Temple, the most important and famous temple in Varanasi, dedicated to Lord Shiva, the Lord and Transformer of the Universe, and presiding deity of Varanasi. Severe security measures were (understandably) in place, but we finally managed to enter the holy compound and perform our worship of Lord Shiva. The sun was rising at the time, and in your reporter's ears still resound with the chanting of Om Namah Shivaya.

After these memorable moments we visited the Annapurna Temple nearby, dedicated to Durga the Goddess of food or plenty. This is also a very important and famous temple, but your reporter has to confess that, after the intensity of feelings during the previous Vishwanatha visit, he found difficult to fully appreciate the beauty and atmosphere of the Annapurna Temple.

In festive mood, we all returned later to the Mission where we had a nice breakfast. Your reporter spent the rest of the morning pacing within the compound of the Varanasi Mission, which also hosts a very large and important hospital. He then prepared to leave the Mission and go to the airport for flights back to Delhi, Hong Kong, Manila and Cebu.

He had only spent only about 24 hours in Varanasi, but not many of them were wasted in sleeping. He felt, however, highly blessed for his short stay in the holy city of Kashi of old, as well as the previous visits to Vindrabhan and Delhi Missions. •

Vedanta Society Schedule

December 2015

1st, 15th (Tue) **CANCELLED**
Scripture Study Zushi

5th (Sat)
Discourse on Bhagavad Gita -
At the Embassy of India in Tokyo
(Bring Photo ID)
(in Japanese only) (from 14:00- 16:00)

6th, 13th, 20th, (Sun)
Yoga-Asana Class
Place : Zushi Annexe (from 14:00-15:30)
Please contact : Hanari 080-6702-2308

12th (Sat)
**The 4th International Congress of
Bengal Studies Japan Committee**

13th (Sun)
IMJ Conference
日本統合医療学会山口大会

19th (Sat)
Discourse on Upanishad
Embassy of India in Tokyo
(Bring Photo ID)
(in Japanese only) (from 14:00 - 15:30)

20th (Sun)
Monthly Retreat at Zushi
At the Kyokai (from 10:30-16:30)
AM Session / Discourse / Prasad Lunch /
PM Session
All are welcome!

23rd (Wed)
Satsanga in Hamamatsu
Contact: Kyokai (046-873-0428)

24th (Thu)
Christmas Eve Celebration
Zushi Centre (from 19:00am-21:00pm)
Please Contact: Kyokai 046-873-0428
Worship / Reading / Discourse / Carols
Light prasad dinner
All are welcome!

※Nara Narayana→**CANCELLED**

• A Story to Remember •

The Ideal of Karma-Yoga

So the only way is to give up all the fruits of work, to be unattached to them. Know that this world is not we, nor are we this world; that we are really not the body; that we really do not work. We are the Self, eternally at rest and at peace. Why should we be bound by anything? It is very good to say that we should be perfectly non-attached, but what is the way to do it? Every good work we do without any ulterior motive, instead of forging a new chain, will break one of the links in the existing chains. Every good thought that we send to the world without thinking of any return, will be stored up there and break one link in the chain, and make us purer and purer, until we become the purest of mortals. Yet all this may seem to be rather quixotic and too philosophical, more theoretical than practical. I have read many arguments against the Bhagavad-Gita, and many have said that without motives you cannot work. They have never seen unselfish work except under the influence of fanaticism, and, therefore, they speak in that way.

Let me tell you in conclusion a few words about one man who actually carried this teaching of Karma-Yoga into practice. That man is Buddha. He is the one man who ever carried this into perfect practice. All the prophets of the world, except Buddha, had external motives to move them to unselfish action. The prophets of the world, with this single exception, may be divided into two sets, one set holding that they are incarnations of God come down on earth, and the other holding that they are only messengers from God; and both draw their impetus for work from outside, expect reward from outside, however highly spiritual may be the language they use. But Buddha is the only prophet who said, "I do not care to know your various theories about God. What is the use of discussing all the subtle doctrines about the soul? Do good and be good. And this will take you to freedom and to whatever truth there is." He was, in the conduct of his life, absolutely without personal motives; and what man worked more than he? Show me in history one character who has soared so high above all. The whole human race has produced but one such character, such high philosophy, such wide sympathy. This great philosopher, preaching the highest philosophy, yet had the deepest sympathy for the lowest of animals, and never put forth any claims for himself. He is the ideal Karma-Yogi, acting entirely without motive, and the history of humanity shows him to have been the greatest man ever born; beyond compare the greatest combination of heart and brain that ever existed, the greatest soul-power that has even been manifested. He is the first great reformer the world has seen. He was the first who dared to say, "Believe not because some old manuscripts are produced, believe not because it is your national belief, because you have been made to believe it from your childhood; but reason it all out, and after you have analysed it, then, if you find that it will do good to one and all, believe it, live up to it, and help others to live up to it." He works best who works without any motive, neither for money, nor for fame, nor for anything else; and when a man can do that, he will be a Buddha, and out of him will come the power to work in such a manner as will transform the world. This man represents the very highest ideal of Karma-Yoga.

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