



JANUARY 2015 - Volume 14 Number 01

# The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

## FEBRUARY Calendar



Swami Brahmanandaji

### Birthdays

**Swami  
Brahmanandaji**  
Wednesday, Feb 10th

**Swami  
Trigunatitanandaji**  
Friday, Feb 12

### Kyokai Events

• **Swami •  
Vivekananda**  
Birth Anniversary

Sunday, February 21st  
Zushi Annexe

(06:30~07:30)  
Mangala, Arati  
(10:30-16:30)  
10:30 Puja, Pushpanjali  
12:30 Prasad  
14:45 Reading,  
Discourse,  
Music program  
Special Guest: Flutist  
16:30 Tea

**See More February  
Events on page 12.**

## ✧ Thus Spake ✧

*"Pray to God that your attachment to such transitory things as wealth, name, and creature comforts may become less and less every day."*

- Sri Ramakrishna

*"He who gives himself up to His supreme will wins the goal, no other actions count in achieving this end."*

- Guru Nanak

Christmas Eve 2016

### "Two Central Teachings of Jesus Christ"

A talk by Swami Medhasananda

Jesus Christ was born more than 2000 years ago. Outwardly, He was just the son of a carpenter, but now see the influence and impact He has had on the whole world.

### Christmas Without Christ?

Not just an ordinary holy man or prophet, He was more than that, He was a man of God. He showed the way of peace and enlightenment to all of humanity. He did not appear for those who would be Christians alone, but for the whole world. This is the justification why we, as members of a Hindu temple, honour Jesus on Christmas Eve. Though we are the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, we derive inspiration from the life and teachings of Jesus, as we do from the life and teachings of the Buddha and other great spiritual leaders.

(con't page 2)

## In this Issue:

- |   |            |                                      |             |
|---|------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| • Thus Spake                            | ... page 1 | • Thought of the Month               | ... page 4  |
| • Monthly Calendar                      | ... page 1 | • TUFs Conference                    | ... page 4  |
| • Christmas Eve at Zushi Centre         |            | • 'Vivekananda & Japanese Buddhists' |             |
| "Two Central Teachings of Jesus Christ" |            | TUFs Talk by Dr. Hirano              | ... page 5  |
| A Talk by Swami Medhasananda            |            | • Kumamoto Satsanga                  | ... page 9  |
| ... page 1                              |            | • Kalpataru New Year's Day           | ... page 11 |
|   |            | • February 2016 Events               | ... page 12 |
|   |            | • A Story to Remember                | ... page 13 |



## Two Central Teachings (from page 1)

Nowadays, people generally celebrate Christmas for marketing or dining and drinking, while the spirit of celebrating Christmas is more or less now lost. But on this occasion we must remember the ideal and the spirit from the wonderful teachings of Jesus Christ, and imbibe the teachings Jesus bequeathed us. Because however much money or comforts of life we may enjoy, they don't give us peace and abiding joy. In fact, the more money we earn and the higher our standard of living becomes, the less mental peace we have, as we can clearly see all around us. Consumerism takes us away from the path of peace. While there is no harm in having a good standard of living, we should remember the lives and teachings of great souls like Jesus Christ on such occasions as this evening, which also helps us to balance our lives.

The origins of most festivals celebrated around the world are religious, but the saddest thing is that we forget these origins and just enjoy the festivals. That is why we must observe Christmas by remembering Jesus. Christmas without Jesus, is like a body without a head.

## The Central Teachings

What are the central teachings of Jesus Christ that we should remember this evening. According to Leo Tolstoy, the great Russian author, there are two central teachings of Jesus Christ; love of God and love of neighbours. Love of God, said Tolstoy, is the love of perfection. As Jesus also said, 'Ye shall be perfect, even as God in Heaven is perfect.' So we should all aspire to become perfect in our own way. Another of Jesus'

central teachings is love of neighbours. Love of neighbours must be followed by serving one's neighbours. Love without service is only lip-service, just superficial and meaningless.

When we observe the life of Jesus, we see these teachings in practice. What tremendous love Jesus had for God. Every page of His life bears testimony to His love of God. Then, too, replete in the Bible are examples of His loving and serving of people. How many afflicted people came to Jesus and had their pains and sufferings removed. Diseased people and even those haunted by ghosts were served, there are so many examples of Jesus removing the sufferings of people. This was not in showing-off some occult powers or in exhibiting a superiority over others, but in showing compassion for people, Jesus healed them and made them whole. Not only physical healing, but more importantly was His mental healing in giving people peace. In regard to service, we even read of His washing the feet of His disciples. This is why Jesus Christ's life is an example of love and service.

## The Higher Ideal?

This begs the question, are the commands to love God and love and serve neighbours two separate things? Or is there a connection between these two teachings? How can these two be connected? Here the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda can help us to establish connections between the two. And that is to see the God we love, the God loved by the devotees, to see that God in the afflicted, in the poor, in the sick, in the illiterate and to serve them. Is this just the act of our imaginings? The scriptures say, 'The Lord is omnipresent.' This is why the Lord is present in every being and in every object. In this sense, the Lord is very much present in living beings.

Sri Ramakrishna said very beautifully that there are two types of chaitanya (consciousness): 'Anumana Chaitanya' and 'Pratyaksha Chaitanya.' Anumana Chaitanya is the consciousness imagined in the picture or statue of God we place on an altar and worship, while Pratyaksha Chaitanya is consciousness becoming evident, for example, in a human being. Hence, worshipping man as living consciousness or the living God and serving Him becomes more justified than worshipping and serving God who is imagined in a picture or statue.

(con't page 3)

## **Two Central Teachings** (from page 2)

There was a great devotee who had a dream in which God appeared and said, 'Tomorrow I will visit you!' The devotee was very jubilant and cleaned his room spick and span and prepared some tasty dishes for the Lord. The next day the devotee was prepared to receive the Lord, but as time passed the Lord did not appear. Suddenly, he heard the doorbell ring, and upon answering it saw a poor man begging for food. The devotee then fed that person until his hunger was allayed and waited again for the Lord. Again, the doorbell rang, and when the devotee answered the door expecting the Lord, he was met by a person in tattered clothing. The devotee felt pity and gave the man a beautiful cloth that he had. Still the Lord did not appear, and very piqued the devotee went to sleep. Again he dreamed the Lord appeared before him and the devotee complained to the Lord for saying that He would come, when He didn't. The Lord answered, 'My son! I did come, but you could not recognise me. But I am happy that though you could not recognise me, you served me well.' This surprised the devotee who asked how it could be so. The Lord explained that He had first come in the guise of the poor man that he fed so well, then again He came in the guise of the man in rags to whom he gave a good cloth.

### **Proper Attitude of Selfless Service**

This means that God is really happy when the afflicted are served. But for this type of service some preparation is necessary, without which service in the right spirit is not possible. While we serve others, there is a chance that we may grow vanity in us. There may be an expectation of name and fame. If there is greed or anger in the person who serves, then the spirit of service is lost. That is why true selfless service, and service in the spirit of service is really difficult.

It is well known, the Catholic organisation offers all sorts of this service in an effort to implement the teaching of Jesus to serve people over a very long period. They have established many dispensaries, hospitals, schools, colleges and many charities. Some of you may recall that at our Golden Jubilee Celebration opening ceremony held at the

Indian Embassy in 2009, we invited Bishop Paul Kazuhiro Mori of Japan to give a talk. The audience highly appreciated Bishop Mori's frank confession as a distinguished office-bearer of the Catholic organisation when he said that although the Catholic Church had conducted many services, most of these had been motivated services. Those services were undertaken with the hope of conversion or as expressions of a spiritual superiority over local spiritual traditions. Bishop Mori then cited Mother Teresa as an example of real selfless service in India. From this comment of Bishop Mori we can understand that though there may be many philanthropic services offered, serving in the spirit of selfless service is really a very difficult task, as such a person must get rid of anger, greed, ego, vanity and selfishness.

In this exercise, if one imbibes a spiritual outlook, it becomes easier to have the right attitude to selfless service. That is why we should look upon the people whom we serve as the veritable manifestation of God. That is why Swami Vivekananda coined the phrases 'daridra Narayana' meaning 'poor Lord', 'rugi Narayana' or 'sick Lord' and 'murkha Narayana' or 'illiterate Lord', because we should serve with the attitude that we are not just serving a poor man; not just a sick man; and not just an illiterate man, but the poor Narayana, the sick Narayana and the illiterate Narayana.

### **The Path to Abiding Peace**

Our Mission has a hospital centre in Varanasi (Benares) and Swami Turiyanandaji, one of the monastic disciples who had been living there, asked a Brahmachari (novice) who serves there what works he was engaged in at the hospital. The Brahmachari answered that he was 'looking after the patients.' Turiyanandaji corrected him saying he should not say that he is looking after the patient, but that he is looking after the 'patient Narayana'. If we want to implement the teachings of Jesus, and love of God or love of perfection, and the love of the people, we need to imbibe this spiritual outlook. Service to people with this attitude is the surest path to peace. People say they want peace, but they do not know how to get peace. To love God and to serve others is the

(con't page 4)



## Two Central Teachings (from page 2)

surest way to abiding peace.

The more we focus on ourselves and our families, the less we get peace. The more we think of God and the more we think of the welfare of others we get peace. There is no second way to get abiding peace.

Swami Vivekananda iterated that the purpose of human life is 'Atmano Mokshartam Jagad-hitaya', meaning to know one's Self is the same as God, and to serve God in others. So if we really want abiding peace, we must remember these two central teachings of

Jesus Christ and their connections—which are very similar to the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda—and to implement them. •

### • Thought of the Month •

A prophet is not a man  
who tells the future;  
he is a man who tells the truth.

- Harold Kushner

## Tokyo University of Foreign Studies 4th International Congress of Bengal Studies

The 4th International Congress of Bengal Studies (ICBS) was jointly held by Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS) and the International Society of Bengal Studies (ISBS) on December 12th and 13th in the university's Research Lecture Building.

TUFS jointly held and managed the Congress, which was the first of the conventions to be held outside of South Asia, alongside ISBS, given that Japan has deep rooted ties with Bengal. A diverse range of research sessions were held and contributed to by around 200 researchers, with topics on literature, linguistics, politics, history, women's studies, theatre studies and more. Though scholars from around the world participated, most of them were from India and Bangladesh. After the sessions had finished, preparations for a show of Bengali dance, song and harp performance began, which was an extremely insightful experience and look into Bengali culture for those who attended.

TUFS President Tateishi was called to open the event before Dr. Jiban Ranjan Majumder, Chargé d'affaires a.i. from Bangladesh and Mr. Amit Kumar, Chargé d'affaires a.i. from India delivered their talks. The development of future ties in education and research between TUFS and the two countries was discussed.

In the first day's morning session on Religious Studies, Swami Medhasananda, President of the Vedanta Society of Japan gave a talk titled, "Swami Vivekananda, Okakura Tenshin and Shitoku Hori." This talk addressed the relationship



between Swami Vivekananda and Okakura Tenshin and Shitoku Hori, and the different objectives between the two visitors to India and Vivekananda's newly formed Mission, especially Hori's dedication to reviving Buddhism in Japan and Okakura's more academic and cultural role in Indo-Japan relations. A lively Q&A session followed the talk, indicating the Swami's brief discourse had sparked much interest.

In the afternoon session Dr. Kuniko Hirano presented "Vivekananda and Japanese Buddhists: The Background Concerning Their Encounter and Interaction" noting Okakura and Hori, but focusing on the Japanese Buddhist monk, Oda Tokuno, who also met with Vivekananda and expressed a desire to study Hinduism.

Cultural programs were also performed including Bengal dances and songs and Indian cuisine was served. This international Congress on Bengal Studies is not only an opportunity for academic exchanges to better understand Bengal, everyone felt it presented warm cultural exchange as well. •

## **Vivekananda and Japanese Buddhists: The Background Concerning Their Encounter and Interaction**

by Dr. Kuniko Hirano  
Visiting Fellow, Institute of Asian Cultures, Sophia University

### **1. Introduction**

From the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, many Japanese Buddhist monks visited India. This paper seeks to elucidate the process whereby certain Japanese Buddhist monks, namely Shitoku Hori (堀至徳, 1876-1903) of the Shingon sect (真言宗), and Tokuno Oda (織田得能, 1860-1911) of the Shinshu-Otani sect (真宗大谷派) approached Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) the founder of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission in India, and the setting and procedures involved in that encounter. This is done with reference to the relationship that existed between Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933) of the Maha-Bodhi Society, and the Japanese Buddhists.

### **Previous Studies Related to this Topic**

With regard to this topic, ever since Kasugal introduced Shitoku Hori's diary, studies have been done on the encounter and interaction between Swami Vivekananda and the Japanese art critic Tenshin Okakura (岡倉天心, 1863-1913), and also on Vivekananda's encounter with the Japanese Buddhist monks, Shitoku Hori and Tokuno Oda, in 1902. ([Kasugai 1971; 1972; 1981], [Horioka 1975], [Okakura 1999], [Swami Medhasananda 2009], [Okakura 2013], [Togawa 2014]). Besides these, studies on the exchange of views between Vivekananda and Okakura have also been conducted ([Shimizu 2013] et al.)

### **2. The World Parliament of Religions**

#### **2.1 Vivekananda's Visit to Japan**

As a representative of Hinduism, Vivekananda participated in the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in the United States in 1893, and on his way to Chicago he happened to halt briefly in Japan. Writing to disciples from Yokohama on July 10, 1893, having visited Nagasaki, Kobe, Osaka, Kyoto, Tokyo and Yokohama, he described the profound impression he received on seeing the temples, some of which had Sanskrit mantras written in old Bengali script, and declared how even priests had awakened to the reality of modernisation in Japan, and other such matters [CWSV, Vol. 5: 5-11]. He also mentioned his impression of Buddhism in Japan, declaring, "It is the same as Vedanta. It is positive and theistic Buddhism." [CWSV, Vol. 5: 210]

In the meantime, Dharmapala, too, visited Japan four times from 1889 to 1913, in order to, among other things, appeal to Japanese Buddhists for aid in reviving the city of Bodhgaya in India. Also, studies relating to links between Dharmapala and certain Japanese Buddhist monks, including Soen Shaku (釈宗演, 1860-1910) who belonged to the Rinzai sect (臨済宗), and Horyu Toki (土宜法髓, 1855-1923) of the Shingon sect (真言宗), have been

(con't page 6)

## Vivekananda & Buddhists (from page 5)

carried out (I Sato 2008] et al). According to Sato, under the influence of the Meiji Restoration, Buddhists in Japan were insisting on the establishment of their creed as, “Japanese Buddhism in the World” [Sato 2008: 43].

## 2.2 The World Parliament of Religions

Vivekananda, Dharmapala and four Japanese Buddhist monks, namely Shaku Soen, Horyu Toki, and Jitsuzen Ashizu (麗津実全) of the Tendai sect (天台宗), and Banryu Yatsubushi (八淵蟻竜) of the Jodoshinshu Hongaji sect (浄土真宗本願寺派), also took part in the World Parliament of Religions, and they were on the same platform with Toki Horyu and Soen Shaku, sitting next to Vivekananda.

Toki went to Calcutta in April 1894 via Europe and Ceylon after his participating in the Parliament [Minakata 2010: 359]. According to the ‘Indian Mirror’ dated 18 May 1894, Dharmapala held a meeting on 14 May at the Minerva Theatre in Calcutta. At this meeting, “His Holiness Utoki, the Bishop of Japan” prepared a short paper expressing his impression of Vivekananda, which was read out by Dharmapala.

In it he said, “... though separate nations ethnologically, they were the same people in thought and idea. This had been his impression ever since he met Vivekananda at Chicago.” [Basu 1969: 23] Judging from the time, this Utoki might be identified as

Toki Horyu. However, Toki does not seem to have had direct relationship with Vivekananda.

## 3. Vivekananda and Japanese Buddhists, Oda and Hori

### 3.1 Oda and Josephine Macleod

It is said that Okakura happened to know Vivekananda through an American lady named Josephine Macleod (1858-1949), who first met him in 1885 and subsequently became his devotee. Macleod was staying at Tokuno Oda’s residence in 1901, namely the Souon Temple (宗恩時) in

Asakusa (浅草), Tokyo. Tokuna Oda was the chief priest of that temple.

Oda wrote about Macleod as follows, “A certain American lady who had been very much impressed by his (Vivekananda’s) speech and who

had become a devotee of Hinduism, stayed at my temple for a while to study Buddhism on her way from India to America.” (Dento, No.266, p.35)

Oda was a Buddhist monk who came from Fukui Prefecture and was an acquaintance of Okakura. He was a learned person who had many writings to his credit including, “The Brief History of Buddhism of Three Countries” (三国仏教略史), which was a work jointly executed with Mokurai Shimaji (島地黙雷), a Buddhist monk. Oda also had experience studying Theravada Buddhism



(con't page 7)

## Vivekananda & Buddhists (from page 6)

in Siam (Thailand). However, he could not complete his last work entitled “Dictionary of Buddhism” (仏教大辞典) due to disease. Hence the editing was concluded by Buddhist scholars Junjiro Takakusu (高橋順次郎), Bunyu Nanjo (南條文雄) and others. This book was highly evaluated and translated into Chinese.

Oda was posthumously given the title of “Lecturer,” which is the highest scholarly rank of his religious sect. His struggle to edit the Dictionary, as well as his personality, was the subject of an NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) programme on 27 April 1952. [Tokyo Ichikumi Kiumishi Hensan Iinkai, 1987: 78]

I visited the Souonji Temple in 2006 to meet Reverend Shigeru Oda (織田繁), the great grandson of Tokuno Oda, and I asked him if they had any documents relating to Vivekananda. I was told that almost all historical materials of the temple had been burned in 1923, owing to the great Kanto (Tokyo) earthquake of that year.

However, I received an article written by Hajime Oda (織田一), a grandson of Tokuno Oda, and in that article he wrote as follows with reference to Josephine Macleod, “I just heard from my grandmother’s younger sister, named Tome (トメ), that in those days a Westerner named Maclonald (which is the way many referred to Macleod), was staying at the Souonji Temple, and that my grandmother went to Yokohama to learn about Western dishes. She might have been studying Japanese Culture through Art at the Nippon Bijutsu-in (日本美術院), that had been established by Tenshin Okakura along with Taikan Yokoyama (横山大観) and Gaho Hashimo (橋本雅邦), previously the Art school.” (Bodaiju, No. 198, p.5)

## 3.2 Oda’s Visit to Calcutta to Meet Vivekananda

Okakura visited Calcutta to meet Vivekananda along with Hori in January 1902, after their meeting, Okakura sent a letter on 10 January 1902 to Oda. In this letter, Okakura presented his impressions of Vivekananda’s great intelligence and personality, and his views on Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhism, as well as Advaita (Dento, No. 256, pp.36-37). Vivekananda and Okakura traveled together to Bodhgaya from the end of January to February 1902.

Hori was a Buddhist monk who came from Nara Prefecture and who had a desire to learn Sanskrit, and he accordingly became the first foreign student at Shantiniketan. However, Hori died of tetanus in Lahore in 1903 at the age of 27, due to an injury he sustained in a traffic accident while traveling in India along with Chuta Ito (伊東忠太), an architect.

Oda departed from Yokohama on 22 February 1902 and arrived in Calcutta on 31 March 1902 (Yomiuri Shimibun, 3 July 1902). According to Hori’s diary, he met Vivekananda probably in the beginning of April 1902. Oda mentioned that Macleod suggested to him to visit India, and he had a desire to study Hinduism (Dento, No. 266, p.35). Hence, it is judged that both Okakura’s letter and Macleod’s suggestion supported Oda’s decision to go to India.

Oda had an interest in Bodhgaya and travelled there together with Okakura and Hori in April 1902. He had participated earlier in a lecture meeting with Dharmapala in Japan, and he also seemed to have an interest in the reviving of

(con’t page 8)



## **Vivekananda & Buddhists** (from page 7)

Bodhgaya.

Oda reported on his travels to Bodhgaya for the Yomiuri Shimbun on July 3-4, 1902. When he entered a stupa at Bodhgaya, he wrote, “How happy I am to be here, a sacred place to worship, coming all the way. I am greatly moved to tears and don’t know what to say.” Then he chanted a short sutra (小経) with tears, and came out (of the stupa). He also reported, “Hindus worship the Buddha as an avatar of Vishnu and as a guru in this worldly life, which is not at all different from the Buddhists.” This must have been a sincere feeling because Buddhists had once regarded Hinduism as being exclusive.

### **3.3 The Plan of the ‘Hindu-Buddhist Religious Conference’**

Okakura and Oda desired to invite Vivekananda to Japan for a Parliament of Oriental Religions (Toyo Shukyo Kaigi, 東洋宗教会議) that they planned to hold. Judging by its timing, this forum may be identified as the ‘Hindu-Buddhist Religious Conference,’ referred to in the Indian Mirror 22 August 1902, and the conference was expected to be a success [Bengali Translator’ Office, No. 34 of 1902: 347-8].

Ultimately it was not held, due to the death of Vivekananda (4 July 1902) and several other factors. According to the ‘Bengalee’ of 2 November 1902, their correspondent in Tokyo reported on this conference with the title ‘No Religious Congress,’ as follows: “As I understand, the idea was first propounded by Rev. Oda, a Buddhist priest of Eastern Honganji (東本願寺) last spring, when he paid a visit to the late Swami

Vivekananda. The late lamented Swami encouraged him, and the result was that Rev. Oda made a tour in China and invited Buddhist priest to this Religious Congress to be held in conjunction with the Osaka Exhibition of 1903.” [Basu 1969: 282]

### **4. Conclusion: The Encounter Between Hinduism and Buddhism**

This dynamic encounter and interaction took place between Vivekananda and Japanese Buddhists, namely Oda and Hori, in the early twentieth century. Compared with the World Parliament of Religions, this interaction was rather individual and just one aspect of the revivalism of Hinduism and Buddhism. However, it might be considered as the first step in the dialogue for better mutual understanding between Hinduism and Buddhism, because they found that Hinduism and Buddhism have close connections through their experiences of the influence of ‘Buddha.’ As far as I am concerned, the background of their encounter had several factors, such as Vivekananda’s experience in Japan, the World Parliament of Religions, the relationship between Vivekananda, Macleod and Okakura, the interest in the revival of Bodhgaya among Japanese Buddhist monks, and other elements.

In this presentation I considered Toki in relation to Dharmapala. Further analysis, such as the liaison between Vivekananda and Dharmapala, Dharmapala and Oda, Hori and other Japanese Buddhists will be required, in order to visualise this topic in a wider perspective.

Thank you for your kind attention.



## Kumamoto Satsanga

The contributor of this report asked to remain anonymous

Swami Medhasanandaji (Maharaj) gave a discourse on 'True Freedom: Learning from Scriptures' at Honmyoji Temple in the city of Kumamoto on Sunday 29 November 2015.

Blessed with serene weather the event was joined by 57 people including the organising staff, quite a large number for an event of this sort taking place in a provincial city, some of whom came from as far as Miyazaki and Oita Prefectures. This was the 12th time the annual satsanga had been held and although there were those keen to join each year, the majority attended for the first time with many from younger generations which was particularly impressive.

Leaving Osaka on the morning of the day, Maharaj had lunch with friendly conversation with all the staff as soon as he arrived, without taking a rest.

The satsanga began with peace prayers at 1 p.m. Maharaj led the attendees by chanting mantras bit by bit so they could chant together in Sanskrit and Japanese which filled the venue with spiritual vibration. Maharaj started his discourse by asking, "What is freedom?" He continued, "We often say 'I want freedom' but by the word what do we mean? It is actually about what we like. We want to eat what we like and to do what we like. We want to do what we like or want at the levels of body, senses, mind and intelligence- that is what we call freedom." He went on to the point that there are four levels of freedom, social,



physical, sensory and mental, all of which are temporary.

The discourse was followed by a 15 minute break during which spiritual books, chai, coffee, snacks and Indian accessories were sold, which helped create a comfortable climate for first time attendees to easily chat.

There were some music programmes after the break. Firstly, Chitraratha and the members of Mother-No-Kai (Group of Mother) sang the Gayatri Mantra together with the audience who automatically starting to sing which gradually filled the venue with light of love. Then Chitraratha sang Itsukushimi (Compassion) and finally Mother-No-Kai sang Aoi Sora O Mite (Looking at the Blue Sky).

In the Q&A session that followed various questions were asked. Here is a summary:

Q: How can I stop thinking negatively?

A: Try to keep the mind busy. When it is free it moves around seeking something to work on. We should control our mind and focus it on something eternal rather than something temporary. Some specific ways to do so are:

- Plan a schedule from morning to night so our mind cannot have free time to wander.
- Live well in the moment and concentrate on what we are currently doing, so we will not think about our past failures and worry about our future.

(con't page10)





Kumamoto Satsanga (from page 9)

Maharaj also asked us three questions:  
When is the most important time of the day?

What is the most important job we have?  
Who is the most important person?

The answers were that now is the most important time; the job we are doing at this moment is most important one; and the most important person is the one in front of us this moment. Saying that these are the keys to living well he added that we should chant holy mantras silently if we have something negative in our mind. At the end of the Q&A session, we said in unison, "We won't quit but keep going!"

The whole programme ended serenely by Maharaj's guided meditation with the

attendees praying peacefully. The discourse had such a deep topic for those who joined for the first time that some were keen to hear more about the discourses. After the programme, many asked questions of Maharaj individually, as well as those from the staff at the store which showed their eagerness and awareness.

In the follow-up questionnaires, they each made impressively meticulous comments such as, "It was very easy to understand although some words and parts were difficult to follow" and "Thank Maharaj with lots of good words and love". As well as citing some of the topics they are interested in hearing in future regarding the soul and the feeling of satchidananda.

We moved on to an organic food restaurant to have dinner with Maharaj sharing feedback on the satsanga and future plans of Kumamoto Mother-No-Kai.



Maharaj then stayed in Aso, Kumamoto for three days from that day and continued to inspire us with valuable talks and teachings. We had a holy and joyous time, feeling as if we were sharing life with Sri Ramakrishna. I thank Maharaj for talking to each and every one of us despite the very busy programme. I thank Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda for leading this event to success. •



## Kalpataru New Year's Day

On Friday, January 1, 2016 the Zushi Centre held its annual Kalpataru and New Year's Day observance. At 11:50 devotees, family members and friends assembled in the Shrine room for a brief introduction and Vedic



Mantra by Swami Medhasananda. Readings in Japanese and English from The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, teachings of Sri Sarada Devi - The Holy Mother, Lord Buddha Sutras and The Bible, and a silent prayer followed.



Lunch Prasad was served from 12:30, during which all enjoyed casual conversation with the Swami sharing anecdotal stories regarding the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.



At 2 PM a small party made the traditional pilgrimage on foot to Daibutsu (Buddha Statue) in nearby Kamakura. After the swami led the group in offerings and prayers there, the group continued on to visit to Yukinoshita



Catholic Church to offer more prayers. Later a few members continued on to the very busy Hachimangu Shrine where thousands continued coming to offer traditional New Year's prayers.



# **Vedanta Society of Japan**

## **Schedule of Events**

### **February 2016**

#### **7th (Sat)**

Discourse on Bhagavad Gita -  
At the Embassy of India in Tokyo  
(in Japanese only) (from 14:00- 16:00)

#### **9th (Tue)**

Study class at Zushi Centre  
(from 10:00~12:30 )

#### **7th, 14th, 28th, (Sun)**

Yoga-Asana class -At the Annexe (from 14:00-15:30)  
Please Contact: Kyokai (046-873-0428)

#### **20th (Sat)**

Discourse on Upanishad -  
At the Embassy of India in Tokyo  
In Japanese, bring photo ID (from 14:00 - 15:30)  
Please Contact: Kyokai (045-873-0428)

#### **21st (Sun)**

**Swami Vivekananda Birthday Celebration**  
Annexe Building (from 10:30-16:30)

#### **Morning Session**

Puja, Arati, Pushpanjali (offering of flowers)

12:30 Lunch Prasad

#### **Afternoon Session (14:45)**

Reading, Discourse, Music program  
Special guest: Flute player

16:30 Tea

#### **26th (Fri)**

Nara Narayan: Service to homeless Narayan  
Please Contact: Yoko Sato (090-6544-9304)

#### **27~28th**

Satsanga in Okinawa  
Check website for further details soon.  
[www.vedanta.jp](http://www.vedanta.jp)



## • A Story to Remember •

### The Age of Unconsciousness

Once upon a time there was a forest where the birds sang by day and the insects by night. Trees flourished, flowers bloomed and all manner of creatures roamed about in freedom.

And all who entered there were led to Solitude which is the home of God who dwells in Nature's silence and Nature's beauty.

But then the Age of Unconsciousness arrived when it became possible for people to construct buildings a thousand feet high and to destroy rivers and forests and mountains in a month. So houses of worship were built from the wood of the forest trees and from the stone under the forest soil. Pinnacle, spire and minaret pointed towards the sky; the air was filled with the sound of bells, with prayer and chant and exhortation.

And God was suddenly without a home.

God hides things by putting them before our eyes!

Hark! Listen to the song of the bird,  
the wind in the trees,  
the ocean roar;  
look at a tree, a falling leaf, a flower,  
as if for the first time.

You might suddenly make contact  
with Reality,  
with that Paradise,  
from which we,  
having fallen from childhood,  
are excluded by our knowledge.

Says the Indian mystic Saraha:  
"Know the taste of this flavour  
Which is the absence of Knowledge."

from 'The Prayer of the Frog' by Anthony de Mello S.J.

Issued by: **The Vedanta Society of Japan** (Nippon Vedanta Kyokai)  
4-18-1 Hisagi, Zushi-shi, Kanagawa-ken 249-0001 JAPAN  
Phone: 81-46-873-0428 Fax: 81-46-873-0592  
Website: <http://www.vedanta.jp> / Email: [info@vedanta.jp](mailto:info@vedanta.jp)