



FEBRUARY 2016 - Volume 14 Number 02

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

MARCH Calendar

Birthdays



**Sri Sri
Ramakrishna Deva**
Thursday, March 10

**Sri Gouranga
Mahaprabhu**
Wednesday, March 23

Swami Yogananda
Sunday, March 27

Kyokai Events

**Sri Sri
Ramakrishna Deva**
Birth Anniversary

Sunday, March 20
Zushi Annexe

06:30 Mangala, Arati
10:30 Puja, Pushpanjali
12:30 Prasad
14:45 Reading,
Discourse,
15:45 Music program
16:30 Tea
18:00 Evening Arati

**See More March
Events on page 3.**

✧ Thus Spake ✧

"How attached the Master was to Truth! He used to say that Truth alone is the austerity of the Iron Age (Kali Yuga). One attains to God by sticking to Truth."

- Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi

"Unite and make common cause with all agencies that fight for Truth."

- Zarathushtra

January Zushi Retreat 2016
Public Celebration

Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi 164th Birth Anniversary

On Sunday, January 17, the Vedanta Society of Japan's monthly Zushi Retreat celebrated the 164th birth anniversary of the Holy Mother, Sri Sri Sarada Devi.

Mangala arati (morning worship) began at 06:00am in the Main Zushi Ashram attended by a few local residents and volunteer devotees who had spent the night at the Centre or at Holy Mother House nearby so that they might get an early start on the many chores necessary to accommodate the celebration and guests.

After breakfast the Zushi Annexe building was abuzz with preparations of the altar with food and floral offerings, the platform, puja vessels and utensils, pushpanjali flower trays for the congregation, along with seating and audio/video preparations.

(con't page 2)

In this Issue:

- Holy Mother's Ideal Life and Teachings - A talk by Swami Medhasananda
- Thus Spake ... page 1
- Monthly Calendar ... page 1
- January Zushi Retreat Public Celebration Holy Mother Sri Sri Sarada Devi 164th Birth Anniversary ... page 1
- March Calendar of Events ... page 3
- Thought of the Month ... page 5
- Swami Addresses Conference on Integrative Medicine in Yamaguchi ... page 7
- Cultural Programme Photos ... page 7
- A Story to Remember ... page 9



Holy Mother Public Celebration (from page 1)

At the altar Swami Medhasananda (Maharaj) completed setting of the offerings and selected the blossoms to adorn the photos of Sri Sarada Devi, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. He then dabbed each with sandal paste before prostrating, launching a volley of conch shell bellows (shankha) to announce the start of the puja (worship).

Maharaj conducted the puja and the quiet residential neighbourhood echoed with occasional blasts of conch shells. Arati then commenced with symbolic offerings of the five elements to the continuing call of conch, bells, cymbals, as the congregation sang Khandana Bhava Bandhana. Ms. Shanti Izumida then led the congregation in singing Sarvamangala Mangalye on synthesiser.



Flowers were then passed out for pushpanjali (flower offering) and Maharaj went throughout the gathering sprinkling Ganga water on everyone before leading all in a pushpanjali mantra to the Holy Mother before each offered their prayers and flower. Food offerings were then collected and taken to the Main Ashrama kitchen where the prasad lunch was about to be served.

The afternoon session began about 14:30 with chanting and readings from 'The Gospel of the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi'. Maharaj then gave a talk in English he titled, 'Holy Mother's Ideal Life and Teachings' interpreted by Ms. Satsuki Yokota. [See page 4 of this issue.]



Upon the completion of the discourse a group of three Japanese devotees were called upon to lead the congregation in singing the Japanese devotionals written by Ms. Shanti Izumida, who along with Mr. Das on tabla, accompanied the singers. At the conclusion of these songs, an Indian devotee sang a cappella.

Then the main cultural session guest, Sri Devaldev Jana was called upon to offer his traditional Indian dance whose presentation and skill was greatly appreciated by all in attendance.

Tea was served thereafter. •

**Vedanta Society of Japan
Schedule of Events**

March 2016

5th (Sat)

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

6th, 13th, 27th (Sun)

Yoga-Asana Class

Zushi Annexe (from 14:00-15:30)

Please Contact: Hanari 080-6702-2308 (羽成淳)

8th (Tue)

Study Class in Zushi

14:00~15:30

Please Contact: benkyo.nvk@gmail.com

10th (Thu)

Sri Ramakrishna Birthday

06:00~ Mangala Arati

20th (Sun)

March Zushi Retreat

Sri Ramakrishna Birthday Public Celebration

Zushi Annexe (from 10:30-19:30)

06:30~7:30 Mangala Arati

10:30-Puja, Pushpanjali, Homa

13:00-Prasad

14:45-Discourse

15:45-Special music program

16:30-Tea

18:00-Evening Arati

25th (Fri)

Nara Narayana

Service to Homeless Narayan

Please Contact: Yoko Sato (090-6544-9304)

26th (Sat)

Discourses on Bhagavad Gita & Upanishads

(Japanese language only)

are given in Osaka and Kyoto on a monthly basis.

For details please contact info@vedanta.jp

Holy Mother's Ideal Life and Teachings
Afternoon session talk by Swami Medhasananda

It is well known that Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi was the spiritual consort of Sri Ramakrishna. We all pay our respects to Her, not only because She was the wife of Sri Ramakrishna, but because of Her own spiritual height as well.

You also perhaps know that she never gave birth to any child because the relationship between Her and Sri Ramakrishna was purely spiritual. She did, however become the Mother of all, and on one occasion even stated that She was not only the Mother of all human beings, but the Mother of all animal beings as well.

After Sri Ramakrishna passed away, She gave spiritual instruction to many devotees. She also became the patron saint, philosopher and guide of the newly established Ramakrishna Order. She was also regarded as the organisation's high court, and when some confusion or doubt arose among the monastic disciples or devotees regarding the ideal or methods of work or spiritual practice, such cases were referred to Holy Mother whose decision was considered the final word on the matter.

The Ideal Householder

How is the study of life and teachings of The Holy Mother relevant to us? In examining this question we may first ask if She is just a historical spiritual figure, or if She has relevance even today?

Holy Mother's life was multifaceted. She was also considered an 'ideal householder'. There are relatively few monks and most people are householders. So many of us are interested to know how the life of Holy Mother can be instructive to one on becoming an ideal householder? This means being ideal in marriage; living with

relatives, some of whom are trouble makers; loving and serving them, yet remaining calm and peaceful. Holy Mother's life demonstrates how one can lead an ideal householder's life. Ideal means loving without attachment and doing daily routine work with dedication and enthusiasm. Many of us become stressed with work, but in Holy Mother's life we observe that no matter the demands on Her, She always remained peaceful and joyful.

Love without Attachment

Most of us cannot love without attachment and yet we know that attachment eventually leads to some type of suffering due to frustration, unhappiness, disappointment, the feeling of being bound or lack of freedom, etc. If these are the consequences of attachment, should we then cease to love? No. There is a fine distinction between love and attachment that remains unclear to most people.

One disciple asked Holy Mother, 'How do you look upon us?' She answered, 'I look upon you as my son, but I also see Narayana [God] in you.' So the solution is to combine these two attitudes in order to love without attachment. There is no contradiction in this. Look upon your son as a son; your husband as a husband; wife as wife; but at the same time see the Lord in them. This is how one can love and be free from attachment, by combining the temporary aspect and the eternal aspect of your relatives; not solely one or the other, but in both aspects. Our non-eternal aspect is our body, mind and senses. The eternal aspect is that soul, that spirit within us which we call God. If we combine these two attitudes, it is very possible to love without attachment. This takes prac-

(con't page 5)

Holy Mother (from page 4)

tice, but the more one practices this attitude, the more one is successful at it.

Work as Offerings

The next challenge is how to make doing one's daily chores; the same cooking, the same washing, the same office duties; interesting and new. Many of us have come to dread these works as dull, monotonous and routine drudgery. Holy Mother approached each and every day as a new day with dedication and enthusiasm.

How did She look upon every day as a new day and every work as new work? There are many housewives here, and I imagine at times many of you think of daily housework as a kind of monotonous drudgery that you just cannot give up because it has to be done. The salarymen (company employee) and women here I am sure at times feel the same way, that is, they just do not feel like going to the office. These are common experiences.

We may love our work by changing our attitude toward work. As a devotee think of your work as a prayer to God; as service to God. Think that through your work you are serving many people in your own way. Everyone cannot become the president or prime minister of a country, but in our own way as school teachers, salarymen, office ladies and housewives we can feel we are serving the Lord in our work.

We can even say we are serving our country in our work, because a country depends upon everyone, not just the leadership, but upon everyone doing their part. I am serving my country, because if I am just serving my family or just my company, the feeling of drudgery and a lack of motivation may come. So let us try to feel that through our work we are serving the country; we are serving humanity; we are serving the Lord. Then we can look upon each work with dedication and enthusiasm.

• Thought of the Month •

Motherhood:
All love begins and ends there.

- Robert Browning

Eliminating Stress

Thirdly, we have all become stressful. It is felt irrespective of gender, the nature of one's work or profession or nationality, Stress has become a universal problem. The great challenge comes in doing our work and remaining peaceful and joyful.

Inculcate an attitude of the witness. What is this? It means that all my relationships and all the duties that I perform are not eternal. All these will pass. There is a famous saying, 'This too shall pass.' This the simple adage means that good days, bad days, relationships, works - nothing lasts forever. Either I or you, one or the other, or my work must leave the stage, must pass on. Cultivating this awareness, this consciousness, allows us to see every phenomenon as a witness. This attitude helps us to lose all attachments resulting in our experiencing greater peace and joy.

To cultivate the attitude of the witness one should think, 'I am of it, but I am not in it.' In other words the boat is on the water, the water is not in the boat. If the water is in the boat, it will sink. So let us remember this reality: 'this too shall pass,' which in Japanese it is 'sore mo kiemasu.' Love, relatives, relationships, work, and even our pleasures—all shall pass. Let us love and serve, and do everything our mind wants. Partake in all the joys and fun, but remember this too shall also pass.

Ideal Householder Devotee

Holy Mother was also the ideal for a householder devotee. No matter how busy Holy Mother was, she never forgot to do

(con't page 6)



Holy Mother (from page 5)

her spiritual practices for even a single day. As a householder devotee one can get peace by daily spiritual practice. In Japanese, 'Ichi nichi mo yamenai de kudasai' or don't discontinue your practice for a single day! For if we stop our practice for even one day, we may find difficulties in resuming practice. That is why it is advisable to do spiritual practice, if even for a short time, every day.

By doing so everyday we become connected with the infinite and eternal; what devotees call God. We can see the eternal and infinite in the temporary, non-eternal and finite all around us. Through spiritual practice, in whatever form it may be, we get connected with the eternal and the infinite. This will keep us balanced in our day to day life.

Ideal Womanhood

Two main aspects of a woman's life are

wifehood and motherhood. As Swami Vivekananda observed, Western civilisation places more emphasis on the wifehood aspect of women, while in India, the motherhood aspect of women is emphasised. If we really analyse this, we can see a great difference. Suppose a girl does not marry, what can the wifehood of that girl be. Such a girl can, however, practice and cultivate an attitude of motherhood even if she remains unmarried. Think of Holy Mother. She had no children, but became regarded as the Universal Mother of all.

There is a lot of discussion these days about the empowerment of women. I wonder about this, because as I see it, women are already powerful. The underlying original purpose of marriage in India is that with the strength and help of the wife (as an incarnation of Shakti), the husband can tear away the net, the cage, of Maya. Marriage is not just for the begetting of children and serving the family. Holy Mother demonstrated this higher purpose of marriage. It is not necessary to give more power to women, what is necessary is to make them aware of the power they already possess and to manifest and use this power judiciously. Holy Mother demonstrated this in caring for a family, in performing Her duties and doing lots of other things.

So we see in Holy Mother the manifestation of the Ideal Householder, the Ideal Householder Devotee and the Ideal Woman, combining both the motherhood and wifehood aspect in perfect balance. •

Swami Medhasananda Addresses Conference of Integrative Medicine in Yamaguchi

The 19th Conference of Integrative Medicine Japan (IMJ) was held in Yamaguchi Civic Hall in Yamaguchi Prefecture on December 12~13, 2015. The theme of the conference was "Art & Science of Humanity – Human Being as Composed of Body,

Mind & Spirit".

This theme seemed to closely mirror many of the teachings of Vedanta, and was a

(con't page 7)



Conference (from page 6)

sign that many healthcare professionals are becoming aware that even with Western medical advances, true good health cannot be achieved without spiritual health.

Swami Medhasananda (Maharaj) delivered a speech at the symposium on Integrative Medicine in Palliative Care. He discussed the essence of spirit as Sat, Chit and Ananda and explained that body, mind and intelligence, as material substances, are limited and bound by time and space, whereas spirit is not material and is eternal and infinite. He emphasised good health has a close relationship with how we create harmony between these different aspects of the whole human being.

Maharaj added that as our inner conscience is God's voice, we feel guilty when we oppose it, and as result of which, contradictions arise inside. This "inner contradictions syndrome" causes psychoneurosis (psychosomatic disorder). For real good health we need inner awareness and to feel connected to God while living our life.

Maharaj insisted the purpose of life is one's self-development from the physical to a spiritual level, and that it is important for us all to aim to achieve that.

After each of the three speakers spoke, they asked and answered questions of each other, which the audience found most interesting. •



Music Programme Photos
Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi's
164th Birth Anniversary Celebration





• A Story to Remember •

Son, Were You Afraid?

"Holy Mother passed her hand lightly over my head and body. At her touch I felt a thrilling sensation and inexpressible joy fill my heart. Mother sat with her eyes closed for some time and then asked me, 'Does Master appeal to you?' As soon as I had confirmed that it was so, she uttered a mantra three times and asked me to repeat it. Just after that she suddenly pointed at the wall alongside saying, 'Here, here is your Ishta!' At once the wall was illuminated by a blinding flash of dazzling light in which a living, effulgent form of a goddess manifested itself. She was gazing at me tenderly. In the twinkling of an eye, something indefinable seem to have taken place. I lost all awareness of myself, being in a state of utter bewilderment. This lasted only a few seconds. Moments later Mother asked me gently, 'Son, were you afraid?' I sat silently with my head bowed, unable to reply.

"Then Mother held my right hand and carefully taught me the process of japa, touching each and every relevant spot on my palm. Mother was speaking to me, but somehow I was not myself. Repeatedly she touched my fingers at the relevant spots, and uttering the mantra, kept demonstrating the method of japa again and again, asking me to repeat the mantra after her. I did so.

"Finally she indicated Master's picture and said, 'Offer pranam to him, he alone is your Guru--he is your all in all, in this world and the next. Master himself is the essence of all gods and goddesses.'

"I offered pranam to the Master and then to the Mother also. Then she gave me the instructions regarding the number of times the mantra was to be repeated and some advice relating to meditation. I did not have any idea at that time of the Mother's real identity, her true nature, nor do I still have any. But it had struck me then that she had the power to bring about at will the manifestation of God.

- An account by Swami Apurvananda in 'Reminiscences of Sri Sarada Devi'

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