



May 2017 - Volume 15 Number 05

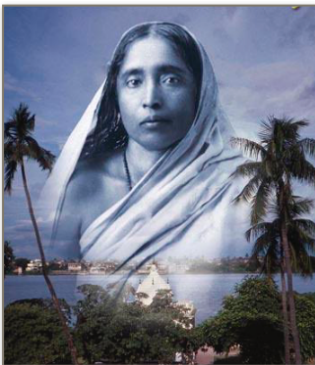
The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

JUNE 2017 Calendar

Birthdays

There are no birth-
days of note this June
according to the
Vishuddha Siddhanta
Almanac



Kyokai Events

June 10th (Sat)

Satsanga in Nagoya

Please Contact: Kyokai
(046-873-0428)

June 11th (Sun)

Satsanga in Tajimi

Please Contact: Ueno
(090-6363-8558)

June 18th (Sun)

June Zushi Retreat 2017 Buddha Celebration

Speaker -Rev Kenso Sato

10:30 ~ 16:30

AM Programme

Lunch Prasad

PM Programme

See page 2 for details



✧ Thus Spake ✧

“My child, austerities or worship, practise all these things right now. Will these things be possible later on? Whatever you want to achieve, achieve it now, this is the right time.”

- The Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi

“When a man makes an honest effort to cleanse himself day by day of his evil thoughts, evil words and evil deeds, then will follow in their wake, as the day the night, good thoughts, good words and good deeds.”

- Zarathushtra

April Zushi Retreat 2017 - Morning Session

“How to Cultivate Bhakti”

A talk by Swami Medhasananda

First let us understand what is meant by God, then we can discuss how to cultivate our devotion to God. For many a difficult question to answer is, “What is God?” However, according to different religions there are different concepts of God.

Concepts of God

According to Hinduism, which has a comprehensive idea about God, firstly, God is consciousness. That consciousness has three features; it is Sat, it is Chit, it is Ananda. These three mean existence absolute, knowledge absolute and bliss absolute. Therefore God is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent.

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• Vedanta Society of Japan •

June 2017 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

June 3rd (Sat)

Discourse on Bhagavad Gita - At the Embassy of India in Tokyo

(in Japanese only) Photo ID required (from 10:00- 12:00)

Please Contact: <https://www.gita-embassy.com/>

Every Sunday

Hata Yoga Class at the Zushi Annexe

(from 14:00~15:30)

<<http://zushi-hatayoga.jimdo.com>>

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

June 10th (Sat)

Satsanga in Nagoya

Please Contact: Kyokai (046-873-0428)

June 11th (Sun)

Satsanga in Tajimi

Please Contact: Ueno (090-6363-8558)

June 13th (Tue)

Gospel Class at Zushi

(from 14:00 pm- 16:30pm)

Please Contact: benkyo.nvk@gmail.com

June 17th (Sat)

Discourse on the Upanishads - At the Embassy of India in Tokyo

From 10:00~12:00 • Talk in Japanese only • Photo ID required

Please Contact: Kyokai (045-873-0428)

June 18th (Sun)

June Zushi Retreat 2017 - Buddha Birth Celebration

Morning Session Guest Speaker Reverend Kensho Sato

of the Singyo-ji Temple of Fuchu City, Tokyo

A lecturer at Taisho University and researcher for the

Jodo Shu Research Institute

(10:30~16:30)

Morning Session Talk / Lunch Prasad / Afternoon Session / Tea

June 23rd (Fri)

Nara Narayan:

Service to Homeless Narayan

To participate, please contact: Ms. Yoko Sato (090-6544-9304)

How to Cultivate Bhakti (from page 1)

Being omnipresent, in what form is God? According to Hinduism God is in the form of consciousness in every being. What then about physical matter, the things and articles of creation? According to Hinduism God is here too, but in a latent or hidden form. So in stone also there is God; there is consciousness, but it is latent. As we know, there is latent energy in the simple atom. From the outside we cannot see it, but scientifically we know there is tremendous energy in each and every atom. In the same way, if we acknowledge the tremendous energy in the electron, proton and neutron of every atom, which is not apparently visible, we must acknowledge there is consciousness there too, which may not be apparently visible.

Further, God is the Creator; God is the Sustainer; God is the Destroyer of this universe.

This same consciousness which is God, also takes the form of deities, for example, Shiva, Vishnu, Durga, Saraswati, Ganesh, etc. God takes the forms of gods and goddesses so that devotees may concentrate and can love them. If the devotee wants to love and respect God, it is difficult to develop love and devotion towards abstract concepts. So the omnipresent consciousness becomes concretised in the form of a deity, a God or Goddess. Some people criticise this Hindu custom as idolatry, but there is a great philosophy behind such image worship.

There is yet another concept; that God manifests or incarnates as a human being, so that, again, devotees can love God as a human being; It being easier for humans to identify with a human form of God. This form of God comes to guide humanity in the path of peace and wisdom. Examples of this concept include Krishna, Rama, Buddha and Jesus Christ. In Hinduism we identify

these incarnations with the special term 'Avatara' and in Japanese 'keshin.'

So please remember, among all these four very basic and fundamental aspects of God, choose whichever you prefer; whichever is easiest for you to imagine for your practice of religion and devotion.

Let me repeat these aspects once again in a little different manner. Firstly, God is pure-consciousness at the macro-level and the soul or consciousness at the micro-level. Secondly, God is the Creator, the Sustainer and the Destroyer, which is similar to Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Thirdly, God has taken the forms of deities so that devotees can concentrate on

and love God. Fourth are the incarnations of God. Loving any one of these aspects of God is what is called Bhakti or love of God. This is thus, a comprehensive definition of God in which every Christian, Islamic, Hindu or other concept of God is included.



Even Buddhism, which does not declare a belief in God, but believes in some eternal consciousness, is included. Then again, Buddhists themselves, for all practical purposes, regard Buddha as God. They prostrate, offer prayers, flowers and food to Buddha as God in the same manner as other religions practice. For practicing Buddhists, Buddha has taken the position of God.

Concept of Bhakti

In describing Bhakti, let me begin by giving some definitions. According to Narada, who wrote a wonderful Aphorism on the subject called "Narada Bhakti Sutra," immeasurable love for God is Bhakti, devotion. According to the great poet-sage Vyasa who wrote

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How to Cultivate Bhakti (from page 3)

many of the Puranas and the epic poem Mahabharata, which includes the Bhagavad Gita, the tremendous attraction for and performance of ritualistic worship is love of God, or Bhakti. According to the great sage Garga, the listening to the name of God, and the singing and praising of God's name are devotion. The sage Sandilya said that to know God as one's own soul; to offer one's love for one's own self to God; and to remove any obstacle to that love of God is devotion to God.

Narada also gives a more specific definition of Bhakti as whatever we perform, our rituals, our spiritual practice, the offering of all these to God is Bhakti. Also, interestingly, if for a single moment one is separated from God one experiences tremendous heartache; like pangs felt between the lover and the beloved, to Narada this is great devotion. We can relate to this like the separation a mother feels for her baby. In the celebrated stories of Radha and Krishna, separation from Krishna causes great pain for Radha. This feeling of separation is called 'biraha.' Biraha vedana is Bhakti.

We see by such explanations that Bhakti is not something simple—not a simple attraction, but deep love indeed.

Reaching God with Bhakti

How much Bhakti is necessary to reach God? According to Sri Ramakrishna in the Gospel he states that if one's love for God equals that of three attractions combined one can reach God. These are first the attraction of the mother for her child; second the attraction of a chaste wife for her husband; and third the attraction of a worldly man for his possessions. Combine these three attractions together and one can easily attain God. In another place Sri Ramakrishna said that if for three days—just three, not one week, not one month—one continuously weeps for God out of love for him, God will appear before him. It sounds so easy, but is it really easy?

Most of us cannot cry for God for more than three minutes, but for our children, our husbands, wives, loss of money, the tears flow.

Everyone has emotions, we are not made of stone. If we can direct that emotion toward God, ever so slowly it will grow. But it will grow so much so that a single moment of separation from God will create a tremendous pain in our heart. Then we will understand that we have reached that state of culmination, of Bhakti; the highest state of love for God.

In English there is the phrase 'Love at first sight!' in Japanese it is 'Hitomebore.' This kind of love is often not steady, and mostly it is just a momentary, impulsive attraction.

Nine Steps of Bhakti

In scripture such as the Srimad Bhagavatam we find the 'Navavidha Bhakti' or the nine steps of Bhakti. The first of the nine is Shrivana, hearing of God; then Kritana, chanting the name and glories of God and the deity; then is Smarana, the continuous remembrance of God; next is Padashevana, serving the lotus feet of God or physical service to God—obviously referring to God with form, as the formless consciousness would have no feet; then is Archana, worshipping as per the scriptures or ritualistic worship; next is Vandana, or prostrating before God as many of you see Indians do. The next of the nine is Dasya, or being the servant of God; then is Sakhya, to become the friend of God, and finally, Atma Nivedana, offering oneself to God.

First we should get a complete overview of techniques and then choose what we can practice. It is not that we have to practice all these, but practice whatever appeals to you and is convenient and possible for us as a devotee. It is with this idea alone that I am discussing all these techniques for cultivating Bhakti.

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Thought of the Month

"You can't cross the sea merely by standing and staring at the water."

- Rabindranath Tagore

How to Cultivate Bhakti (from page 4)

God wants to experience His own love and sweetness, and this is why He creates Himself as the devotee. If there is no devotee, there is no God either. It is God who has become devotee. Why? The point is that it is a set, the Bhakta and the Bhagavan. If there is no devotee, who will sing the glories of God? There is a beautiful song by Tagore, 'Tai Tomar Ananda' whose wonderful lyrics say in various ways, O'Lord, were I not here, your love would have been futile.

Shravana

The first of the nine is Shravana. What does the listening of the Divine Name mean? It means to listen about His Divine Character; His qualities; to listen to the devotional songs and hymns and divine names—these are all Sharvana.

Again, Shravana is hearing the Lord's divine name, and listening to stories of God's lila or play. In India there are professional scripture readers. In Varanasi they can be seen on the banks of the Ganga reading from the Mahabharata, Bhagavatam, etc. They read and sing and sometimes explain, and devotees can be seen silently listening to the reader and his commentary. This is a common scene in India. Not all can attend such gatherings, so family readings and study circle readings are also quite common. Sometimes listening to another read, rather than reading oneself, can make a greater impression—the audio-visual aspect being more impressive, especially when one is listening to expositions on scripture.

For example, listening to the stories of Sri Krishna's teasing as a child; later, his sporting with the shepherd boys; his dancing with the milkmaids, and so on. These stories and those of the Ramayana and Sri Rama's

exploits never grow old for Indians, even though for Indians like us we have heard them time and again since childhood. A weekly, half-hour Sunday TV serial presenting enactments from the Mahabharata and Ramayana became so popular that the streets would be nearly vacant at that time, as everyone was watching the TV. This fondness for listening to the Lord's Divine Sport or watching it is very common in India. What is the result of this listening? The result is that slowly we become more and more aware of God; understand the nature of God, His qualities and many anecdotes. In doing so, we grow love for God.

Kirtana

Kirtana is chanting the name of God and His glories, known as kirtans and bhajans in India, are very common. With rhythmic, melodious repetitions the singers proclaim the glories of God.

Smarana

Smarana is remembrance of God. We may start with occasional remembering, but the goal of Smarana is constant remembrance of God. In the Bhagavad Gita Sri Krishna gives Arjuna two great pieces of advice regarding Karma Yoga—and if you want to practice Karma Yoga just remember these two: The first part of the advice is O'Arjuna fight! This fight is symbolic, we are not in the military, but we have our own work and in this sense we are fighting. The salaryman's (company employee) work is like fighting. The housewife's many recurring chores are like fighting. Everyone, in doing their job, from the housewife to the doctor to the teacher, is dutifully fighting and at that time Krishna says to remember me always! Then follows the second part of the advice; to 'remember me always during your duties'—that is to



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How to Cultivate Bhakti (from page 4)

maintain connectedness with me (God). We can have this connectedness by remembering God.

This is Smarana, and it can be accomplished by dividing the mind into two parts. With one part we do our job, with another we remember God. In the Gospel Sri Ramakrishna gives us the practical example of a toothache. When one has a toothache, one cannot just give up one's work, and while working part of the mind remains on the pain. This is called 'anusmara.' That is, do your work with one part of the mind and with another part of the mind remember God always. When we identify our entire mind with our work, the problems of attachment, frustration, disappointment, worries and stress all come. This is why with part of the mind we must think of God, Reality, the Supreme Truth. This is a sure way to maintain tranquility of mind during and after work.

How can one do one's duties and constantly remember God at the same time? It depends upon one's practice. It is said that if just 30~40 percent of our mind goes to performing our work, it is enough for most work. The fact is that most of the time our mind isn't even 30 percent focused on work, and moment to moment we are thinking of irrelevant things though we are engaged in some work. So why not be thinking of God instead of thinking irrelevant thoughts, negative thoughts, while engaged in some works?

In this way we can keep connectedness with the Supreme Reality; or with Truth, or God. If we get fully focused on temporary, transient and finite things we will suffer from attachments, frustration, disappointment, worries and stress, but if we focus on God or Truth we attain peace and freedom. So as a devotee we should practice Smarana. •

Vedanta Society of Japan Annual Summer Retreat 2017

"Awareness and Practise of a Higher Life"

Discourse and Q&A with Swami Medhasananda

Saturday July 15 ~ Monday (Holiday) July 17

Reservations requested by June 17th

Where: **On the Shores of Lake Biwa**

Okubiwako Grand Park Makino Hotel

Address: 〒520-1812 Shiga Prefecture, Takashima, Makinocho Nishihama, 763-2
<<http://www.gphotels.jp>> Phone: 0740-1111

Discourse / Outdoor Meditation / Pilgrimage to Hieizan
Chanting & Songs / Lakeside Yoga / Evening Satsanga

Contact: Vedanta Society Japan

Link: <<https://www.vedantajp.com/活動/戸外夏季リトリート/2017琵琶湖>>

<vedantaharmony@gmail.com>

April Zushi Retreat 2017 - Afternoon Session

“Spirituality and Service to Humanity; Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi” A talk by guest speaker Mrs. Shobhana Radhakrishna

After offering Vedic peace prayers, Swami Medhasananda (Maharaj) introduced Mrs. Shobhana Radhakrishna. A long-term friend of the Japanese Vedanta Society, Fr. Prof. Cyril Valiath, of Sophia University had approached Swami with regards to offering Mrs. Radhakrishna the opportunity to address the April Monthly Retreat during her brief visit to Japan. Swami went on to remark that there could be no more appropriate venue for such a talk, as Swami Vivekananda (Swamiji) was Gandhiji's predecessor and many of Swamiji's teachings were practiced by Gandhiji in his life, teachings and works. Gandhiji visited Belur Math on January 30, 1921 to join the Swami Vivekananda Birthday Celebration. Upon request he gave some brief remarks that included the following that was projected for the congregation to read:

Mahatma Gandhi's comments on Swami Vivekananda:

I have come here (Belur Math) to pay my homage and respect to the revered memory of Swami Vivekananda, whose birthday is being celebrated here today. I have gone through his works very thoroughly, and after having gone through them, the love that I had for my country became a thousand-fold. I ask you, young men, not to go away empty-handed without imbibing something of the spirit of the place where Swami Vivekananda lived and died.

The congregation then learned that Mrs. Radhakrishna was born in the Gandhi Ashram and her father had spent 21 years with Gandhi. For the last 35 years Mrs. Radhakrishna has been giving talks about Gandhiji around the world. She is now also a member of the Indian Government's Ministry of Rural Development and gives talks in the public sector in India. This is her fourth visit to Japan and where she has given 24 lectures at various universities. She then begins her talk:

“My first obeisance is to God Almighty who has inspired me to take up this task. My second obeisance is to the Mahatma and Swamiji who enlightens us all from inside out; whose faith and endeavour can be a role model for all of us at all times and in all ages. My third obeisance is to the Atman of all of you whose eyes give me strength.

“I was born in Gandhiji's ashram in central India in Maharashtra. My father spent 21 years in two Gandhiji Ashrams, Sabarmati Ashram in the western part of India in Gujarat and Sevagram Ashram. For ten of those years my father worked with Gandhiji. For the next 60-odd years, ever after Gandhiji's passing away, he continued the Gandhi career. He walked on the path shown by Gandhiji. That path is nothing but the spirituality and service he had learned from Vivekananda, and to take his legacy forward.

“As I am from the Ashram, I would like to tell you a little bit about the Ashram experience. Gandhiji would start all the programmes with prayers, and morning and evening prayers were held daily under the open sky. These prayers were those of all religions, an idea taken from Paramahansa Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, of interfaith harmony and inclusion of all faiths. Gandhiji said that all religions point to the same truth. Therefore we must study the essence of all religions in humility and have reverence for the practitioners of different religions. I would like to share one universal religious prayer, Om Tat Sat Sri Narayana Tu, is the Sarvadharm prayer we as children used to sing in the school. I don't know whether you have heard it or not, but the Sarva-Dharma Prakta (Om Tat Sat Sri Narayana Tu) prayer you are about to hear was sung by a Japanese group.(A recording is then played.)

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Spirituality & Service (from page 7)

Om Tat Sat Sri Narayana Tu
Purushottama Guru Tu
Siddha Buddha Tu Skanda Vinayaka
Savita Pavaka Tu
Brahma Mazda Tu Yahve Shakti Tu
Ishu Pita Prabhu Tu
Rudra Vishnu Tu Rama Krishna Tu
Rahima Tao Tu
Vasudeva Go-Vishvarupa Tu
Chidananda Hari Tu
Advitiya Tu Akala Nirbhaya
Atmalinga Shiva Tu



“Gandhiji wrote down rules for the Ashram and called them Ekadasha Vrata, or The Eleven Observances. In Gandhiji’s childhood he was a very timid and shy boy. He was afraid of the dark. His caretaker, Rambha, gave him a Ramanam mantra and that gave him faith. His mother, who was very pious and devout religious person, gave him his vows. This he followed throughout his life in his quest for truth with regard to vows that he took. Gandhiji’s mother, Putlibai, used to take very hard vows during Cāturmāsa, throughout the year she took harsh vows of vrata (fasting) monthly as well. Later Gandhiji would say these were for her own personal moksha (liberation). Gandhi not only sought salvation for individuals, but for the entire society. He was interested in making personal virtues as societal values.

“The principle behind the 11 rules he set for the ashram was “Do unto others as you do unto yourself.” The first five vows of Ekadasha Vrata are:

1. Ahimsa - Non-violence
2. Satyam - Truth
3. Asteya - Non-stealing
4. Brahmacharya - Self-discipline/chastity
5. Asangraha - Non-possession

“In Vedic literature these five are called Mahabrata. Patanjali refers to these as Panchayama (observances) and Jain literature these are called Panch Mahayama. Buddhists call them Pancha Shila (5 moral precepts) and they have a place in Christian literature as well. These 5 Mahabrata find a place in nearly all the major religions of the world. To these five Gandhiji added auxiliary or support vratas (rules). They are:

6. Abhaya - Fearlessness
7. Āswāda - Control of the Palate

“Without Abhaya (fearlessness) one cannot practice the five Mahabratas at all. Then again Āswāda (control of the palate) is very important for the practice of Bramacharya (self-discipline) and being in the pursuit of the greatest knowledge. That is why Gandhiji added these two auxiliary Vratas.

“Gandhiji came back to India after spending 20 years in South Africa in 1915, and though of course too late to receive Swami Vivekananda’s blessings, the call of observing Swamiji’s message of Daridra Narayana (service to the poor) inspired him to carry this idea forward and serve the India of his time. To this end he added four Vratas.

8. Sarva Dharma Samānātva - Equality of all religions
9. Sharirshrama - Bread-labour - honest livelihood

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Spirituality & Service (from page 8)

10. Swadeshi - Love for country/the Motherland
11. Sparsh Bhavana - Removal of untouchability

“These remaining four of Gandhiji’s 11 Rules or Vows of Ekadasha Vrata are all components of Swamiji’s message when he gave the clarion call to the nation to ‘Arise and awake and stop not till the goal is reached!’

“What a great heritage we have all inherited. I am tracing the similarities between Swamiji and Gandhiji, and as Swami Medhasananda pointed out in his introduction that Gandhiji was carrying on Swamiji’s legacy of spirituality and service, the best way for me to convey this is by citing from my own experiences.

‘The more we come out and do good to others, the more our hearts will be purified, and God will be in them.’ - Swami Vivekananda

“Here let me relate to you a short story regarding the pace of Sevagram Ashram. A Christian priest came to Sevagram to meet Gandhiji. He had arrived in India as part of a delegation from the USA to attend an International Religious Conference in Madras (Chennai), as it was called in those days. This priest came to Sevagram to meet Gandhiji, but Gandhiji was involved in so many scheduled things that the guest had to wait for 3 days before a meeting could be arranged.

*‘The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.’
- Mahatma Gandhi*

“I would like to speak to the openness and transparency of Gandhiji. Anybody could come to the Ashram. Anybody request a meeting to talk with him. Anybody could write to Gandhiji. He was accessible to everybody.

‘Surely Swami Vivekananda’s writing needs no introduction from any body. They make their own irresistible appeal.’ - Mahatma Gandhi

“When the aforementioned priest was finally received by Gandhiji, he asked him to describe the essence of his life. Gandhiji replied with two words, “Renounce and Rejoice.” The Isha Upanishad (Shloka 1) reads:

‘śāvāsyamidam sarvaṃ yatkiñca jagatyāṃ jagat
tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā mā grdhaḥ kasyasvidghanam’

“The meaning is:

- God is omnipresent and He owns the universe, that everything belongs to God. We have nothing of our own.
- Enjoy the objects of the world in an attitude of perfect non-attachment. Enjoy it with a feeling of sacrifice, to the extent that is necessary for us and leave the rest for others in the society. Nothing really belongs to us.
- Never ever crave the possessions of others.

“This is what Swamiji was so concerned about. We had forgotten that which was already known to us in our Upanishads, Vedas and other great scriptures; we had forgotten our own strength, heritage and culture. But even if we should forget everything of our long history, ‘Renounce and Rejoice’ will remain with us and in our culture.

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“With my time growing short here, let me set aside my Ashram experiences and move on to a list of the many similarities Swamiji and Gandhiji’s beliefs and practices:

- Swamiji and Gandhiji stood for the essence of Hinduism, including the inherent divinity of man; the unity of all existence; and the validity of all religions as different paths to the same spiritual destination of truth, peace and harmony.
- Both men were influenced by the Bhagavad Gita and lived accordingly.
- Again and again they talked about interfaith harmony, peace and universal spiritual brotherhood.
- They both maintained that all religions point to the same truth.
- They were deeply connected at the core in their devotion to their motherland.
- Their concern for and service to the millions of miserable Indians was most sincere.
- Both of these great sons of India were passionately patriotic
- They were fearless, courageous and adhered to truth
- They were both lighthearted and playful with a great sense of humour
- Denounced inhuman treatment of the lower caste Hindus
- Selflessly served the needy

“Regarding Gandhiji’s ‘sense of humour’ I would like to tell you about one incident. He had gone to London in 1931 for the so-called Round Table Conference to discuss the modalities of India’s independence. At that time he was granted an audience by the George V King of the United Kingdom and the British Dominions and Emperor of India. Ignoring the request for formal attire Gandhiji went dressed in his loincloth and a shawl to help keep out the cold. One of the reporters asked him if he didn’t feel cold. Gandhiji replied, ‘The Emperor had enough clothes for the both of us.’ Later when Gandhiji was leaving the great capital of London, a reporter asked his impression of Western civilisation. He replied, ‘That would be a good idea.’

“We can see he had a tremendous sense of humour, in fact he said that otherwise he would have been really miserable. Because of his sense of humour he was able to come out of many situations with a lightness of heart and a smiling face.

“Both men ‘denounced inhumane treatment of the lower castes.’ Swamiji and Gandhiji saw eye to eye in finding a common medium to serve God through serving the least of God’s children. Swamiji called them ‘Daridra-Narayan’ or the poor as God-incarnate, and Gandhiji called them ‘Harijan’ or the beloved of God. I may add here they both denounced the inhumane treatment of women as well.

“The both selflessly served the country and left such great examples for us. You all know about Swamiji here, I am only here a very short while so my interest is in also telling you a little bit more about Gandhiji.

‘I shall pass through this world but once. Any good therefor that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.’ - Mahatma Gandhi

“In my opinion Gandhiji’s life was an epic of faith and endeavour. The greater the faith the stronger the endeavour. The foundation of this faith was in God. He realised that he was to be nothing but an instrument in God’s hands and he was to be led wherever God led him. With this realisation he considered all work to be God’s work. He performed all tasks great and small with equal reverence.

(con’t page11)

Spirituality & Service (from page 10)

“He also realised that in each and every one of us there is an element of goodness. We, who are the manifestations of that Supreme Power, have some Godliness in each one of us. Gandhiji’s endeavour was to arouse, nurture and sustain that goodness in people. He also believed that despite all the upheavals in human history, humankind will always progress in an auspicious direction. This is because truth, which is God, is only interested in the welfare of its creation.



“Gandhiji said that he had nothing new to teach the world. Truth, non-violence and purity of means are as old as mountains and practiced by our sages. He merely learned from all the sages that had come before him. While he had those examples to draw upon, he had to follow his own inner voice to guide him in moments of crisis.

‘Through transformation, every human being can be a leader and has the potential to be a leader.’ - Mahatma Gandhi

*‘To earn people’s respect, to get them to love you, to sacrifice for you, is a tall order.’
- Mahatma Gandhi*

“These are very great people and we may think it is not possible for us to become like them; to rise up to that extent; and to become leaders. I just want to tell you the eleven traits that can transform us. Our leaders warn that there are certain tragedies from which all humans bring up their leaders. Mahatma Gandhi was an ordinary person like you and me, but from the examples of all the great sages and his own habit of introspection, of connecting with that inner voice—listening to what that voice was saying, and referring to the Bhagavad Gita or scripture, he transformed himself into what he had become.

“To transform oneself it is very important to have great spiritual values to back you. All the spiritual masters throughout the world have shown that to us. They have shown us the traits we can learn from. One of the first things that both Swamiji and Gandhiji did was to serve selflessly. They did not want any position or return. They did it merely for the love of it.

“Then there is Knowledge or Wisdom; and for that knowledge you should be firmly established in it, live it and be able to communicate it, not merely express it in oratory. All that knowledge is already available to us through our great scriptures, we merely have to study it. My salutations to you in attendance here in that you are already walking that path to knowledge under the guidance of Swami Medhasanandaji.

“Another thing is to have an impeccable character. We should have no self interest and one has to be dedicated to serving people.

“Identify your calling, your Swadharma, your desire to do something and invest your energy in that. For this we have been given two very beautiful devices by that Supreme Being; one is the mind and the other is the intellect. When we start using the mind, we get swayed by our likes and dislikes; our fanaticism; our preferences. Certainly when we are swayed by our emotions, we tend to make wrong decisions. But when the intellect is developed and working; at

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that time what comes is clarity of thought and right decisions. Automatically, then, one cultivates the habits of promptness, discipline and punctuality.

“Another trait is Action—ones obligatory duties. The Bhagavad Gita lists three types of duties as; Niyatam Karma, Kamy Karma and Nishiddha Karma. All these traits were in these two great sons of India. Whatever has to be done, a leader does it. These are our obligatory duties, and we must do them without attachment. A leader must be driven by a higher vision, a larger ideal, not just self-interest, but in the spirit of Yagna (service and sacrifice).

“The qualities a leader must imbue include Oneness and Oneness was felt by them both these personalities. Feeling the divine spirit within, they shared an unlimited capacity to feel love for others, to extend a loving heart of humanity. whatever we do, we must do whole heartedly.

“Another quality of leadership is Objectivity. We all play so many roles in our lifetime. At home you are a mother, wife, granddaughter, or daughter, and here you are a devotee, while outside you are a worker. With objectivity we should play our roles to perfection, to the best of our ability. The moment one role is over, step out of it and evolve spiritually.

“The tenth trait is Satwa or purity, bringing strength and tranquility or serenity of mind. That only comes when we are free from desires. The moment one gets caught up in the web of desires, we are captured. The mind is always restless, not calm and peaceful. In such a state we are unable to detach ourselves from what is going on in the world around us.

“The final quality is to walk the walk and talk the talk. Gandhiji said one should speak as one thinks, and act as one speaks. There should be harmony in ones thought, word and action.

“Great leaders have shown us these precepts throughout the ages. In these two great ones, Swamiji and Gandhiji, I see the same lineage as our ancient spiritual masters and we are very indebted to them.

“With this I acknowledge my deepest gratitude to Swami Medhasananda allowing me to come and give my talk on ‘Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi; Spirituality and Service to Humanity’. I also want to thank Fr Cyril Valiath who couldn’t be with us today, as it is Easter Sunday, for being so kind as to introduce us to The Vedanta Society of Japan. Thank you.”

In his final comments Swami Medhasananda gave his heartfelt thanks to Mrs. Radhakrishna for her talk and to Mr. Ravi Chopra, her husband, who accompanied her and supported her presentation by showing slides (quoted throughout this article) and, finally, Ms. Yoko Sasaki, who proficiently translated for Mrs. Radhakrishna. •



A Story to Remember

The Story of a Wallet

Once an old man was travelling by train on a pilgrimage to Brindavan. At night, whilst he was asleep, his wallet fell from his pocket. A co-passenger found it the next morning and enquired as to whom the wallet belonged. The old man said it was his. A picture of Sri Krishna inside the wallet was proof that the wallet really belonged to him.

The old man then began to relate the story of the wallet. He soon had a group of eager listeners around him. Lifting up the purse for all to see, the old man said: This purse has a long history behind it. My father gave it to me years ago when I was a mere schoolboy. I kept my little pocket money in it and also a photograph of my parents.

Years passed. I grew up and began studying at university. Like every youth, I became conscious of my appearance. I replaced my parents' photograph with that of my own and I would look at it often. I had become my own admirer.

Then came marriage. Self-admiration gave way to the consciousness of a family. Out went my own picture and I replaced it with that of my wife's. During the day I would open the wallet many times and gaze at the picture. All tiredness vanished and I would resume my work with enthusiasm.

Then came the birth of my first child. What a joy I experienced when I became a father! I would eagerly rush home after work to play with my little baby. Needless to say, my wife's picture had already made way for the child's.

The old man paused. Wiping his tearful eyes, he looked around and said in a sad voice: Friends, my parents passed away long ago. My wife too died five years ago. My son- my only son- is now married. He is too busy with his career and his family. He has no time for me. I now stand on the brink of death. I do not know what awaits me in future. Everything I loved, everything I considered my own, has left me.

A picture of Lord Krishna now occupies the place in my wallet. I know He will never leave me. I wish now that I had kept HIS picture with me right from the beginning! He alone is true; all others are just passing shadows.

Sri Sarada Devi, the holy mother, says: Don't be afraid my child, these earthly ties are transitory. Today they seem to be the be-all and end-all of life, and tomorrow they vanish. Your real tie is with God. God is one's very own. It is the eternal relationship. He is ever looking after you. Call on the Lord who pervades the entire universe. He will shower His blessings upon you.

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