



JULY 2018 - Volume 16 Number 07

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

AUGUST 2018
Calendar

Birthdays

**Swami
Ramakrishnananda**
Thursday, 9 Aug

**Swami
Niranjanananda**
Sunday, 26 Aug

Kyokai Events

5th (Sun)
🌸 **NEW** 🌸
**Half Day Retreat
at Zushi**
14:00~16:00
<benkyo.nvk@gmail.com>

19th (Sun) **11:00~**
**August Monthly
Zushi Retreat**
Chanting, Reading,
Discourse by Swami
Medhasananda
Lunch Prasad
Afternoon Session
All are welcome!

14th (Tue)
**Gospel Class
At Zushi**
(14:00~16:30)

**Details on these &
other events on page 2**



✠ Thus Spake ✠

"Is faith so cheap, my child? Faith is the last word. If one has faith, the goal is practically reached."

- Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi

"God is spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

- Jesus, The Christ (John 4:24)

The 125th Anniversary Celebration in Kobe of Swami Vivekananda's Visit to Japan

Reported by Chieko Morioka and Miwako Tanabe

Swami Vivekananda (Swamiji) came to Japan on his way to attend the World's First Parliament of Religions in Chicago, but the details of his journey have not been made clear for a long time. About 2 years ago, Swamiji's steamship route from India to Japan gradually became clear owing to the research conducted by Swami Medhasanandaji (Maharaj). Since then, more research materials have been collected, not only from Indian sources, but also from foreign countries. Only about a year ago did the fact that Swamiji entered Japan through Kobe on the 30th of June become clarified. The idea "we would like to celebrate Swamiji's visit to Japan on the exact day and place where
(con't page 3)

In this Issue:

- | | | | |
|--|-------------|---|-------------|
| • Thus Spake | ... page 01 | Tokyo Public Celebration:
'Swami Vivekananda and Japan'
by Raj Kumar Srivastava, Deputy Chief
of Mission, Indian Embassy Tokyo | ... page 07 |
| • Monthly Calendar | ... page 01 | • Thought of the Month | ... page 08 |
| • Kobe Celebrates 125th Anniversary
of Swami Vivekananda's Visit to Japan | ... page 1 | • 4th Satsanga Osaka Benkyokai | ... page 08 |
| | | Kobe 125th Photos | ... page 10 |
| | | Story to Remember | ... page 13 |

• August 2018 •

Schedule of Events Vedanta Society of Japan

4th (Sat) 10:00~12:00

Discourse on Bhagavad Gita

At the Embassy of India in Tokyo

<http://www.gita-embassy.com/>

5th (Sun) 14:00~16:00

Half Day Retreat at Zushi Centre

Chanting, Readings on meditation and spiritual life

Discussion, Meditation, Tea and snacks

Please contact: benkyo.nvk@gmail.com

14th (Tue) (14:00~16:30)

Gospel Class at Zushi Centre

18th (Sat) 10:00~12:00

Discourse on The Upanishads

At the Embassy of India in Tokyo

<<http://www.gita-embassy.com/>>

19th (Sun) 10:30~16:30

Monthly Retreat at Zushi

Speaker: Sw. Medhasananda

Lunch Prasad

Afternoon Session

25th (Sat) 13:30~17:00

Discourses in Osaka

Discourses on "Bhagavad Gita" and "Upanishad"

are given in Osaka and Kyoto on a monthly basis.

For details please see: <<http://vedanta.main.jp/index.html>>

26th (Sun)

Satsanga in Hamamatsu

Please Contact: Noriko <happy-yoga@outlook.com>

Every Saturday Yoga-Asana Class

At the Annexe (from 10:45-11:45)

Please Contact: Hanari 080-6702-2308

(羽成淳) <<http://zushi-hatayoga.jimdo.com/>>

CANCELLATION

Nara Narayan: Service to the Homeless Narayan in August

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

Kobe 125th (from page 1)

it happened” evolved when devotees of Kansai, who worked on research together with Maharaj, were taking a walk in Zushi. At that time it became clear that the 30th of June 2018 would be the 125th anniversary from Swamiji’s visit to Japan and that that day would fall on a Saturday, which is an ideal day to hold such a celebration.

Thus energised, a Celebration Committee was organised within a few months consisting of regular members of the bi-monthly Gita and Upanishad Study Group in Osaka. Some members from the Vedanta Society of Japan also supported the preparations for the celebration. The combined Celebration Committee wanted to hold the ceremony at the exact place where Swamiji had landed, but that location had been reclaimed and paved with a road. So the southeast end of Meriken Park (Port of Kobe), where the nearest wharf to the one Swamiji had landed, was chosen to hold the ceremony. The Committee also decided to worship at the Hoyogo Daibutsu (Buddha Statue in Hyogo) where Swamiji might have visited while sightseeing in Kobe; the Committee selected these two spots for the morning program. The Committee also decided to rent a hall for the main event in the afternoon and invite guests to give talks on Swamiji and Japan. Some Committee members visited Kobe again and again to find an appropriate hall; visited the Nōfuku-ji Temple of Hyogo Daibutsu and contacted the resident priest; and contacted the Consulate General of India, at Osaka-Kobe. Through their efforts the 125th Anniversary of Swamiji’s Landing was arranged, prepared and promoted, and at long last, the 30th of June 2018 arrived.

This celebration proceeded graciously and flawlessly by the grace of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swamiji, in addition, of course, to the many efforts of the volunteers, and both the organisers and the participants could enjoy this celebration together.

Prayer Ceremony at Kobe Port

It had rained heavily the day before the ceremony causing some concern, but we enjoyed clear blue skies on celebration day. We had worried about strong winds at the port too, but it was a perfect day to hold the events and we felt it was by the grace of Swamiji. At Meriken Park, we set up a small altar with Swamiji’s photo and spread enough blue plastic picnic sheets to seat 25 people, including volunteers who had mainly come from the Kansai area. At the very moment the ceremony began at 9 a.m., a ship coincidentally sounded its whistle repeatedly. It was just as if Swamiji’s ship had just entered the port, or like a conch shell sounding loudly to bless us. Simultaneously we all felt, “Swamiji is here and watching over us!”. The ceremony continued in such an atmosphere. First, Mr. Kiyohisa Tanaka offered a bouquet to Swamiji on behalf of us all and cried with loud voice, “Swamiji! Welcome to Japan!” and all of us echoed his call and we, too, repeated, “Swamiji! Welcome to Japan!” We were very moved. Incense was offered and we all chanted Vedic peace mantras. Maharaj described to us Swamiji’s movements from India to Japan. Ms. Chieko Morioka then read Swamiji’s letter in which he described his impressions of Japan and the Japanese people. Silent prayers were offered to Swamiji and we chanted a closing mantra. This brought the ceremony at the Port of Kobe to a close.

(Con’t page 4)



Kobe 125th (from page 1)
Worship at Hyogo Daibutsu

We were divided into two groups and one went to the Hyogoken Shigaku Kaikan (hall) directly to set up for the afternoon programme, and the other members proceeded over to

the Hyogo Daibutsu at Nōfuku-ji. At the era of Swamiji's arrival, passports were issued after landing in Japan, so Swamiji most likely spent two days in Kobe to get this passport issued, and he might have gone sightseeing around Kobe. We chose Hyogo Daibutsu as the second ceremony spot, because there is every probability that Swamiji visited here during his stay. The reasons this is supposed are that; this popular Daibutsu was famous at the time as one of the three largest and newest Daibutsu in Japan (the others being in Nara at Todaiji Temple and in Kamakura at Kotokuin Temple); the location around Hyogo Daibutsu is where the busy streets of that time were; and Swamiji might have caught a glimpse of Hyogo Daibutsu from the steamship arriving at Kobe and would have wanted to visit the site. The modern day Hyogo Daibutsu is not the original one, but the stone lanterns and incense bowl of that era remain in place today.

We arrived at the Nōfuku-ji Temple of the Tendai Sect just before 10 a.m. and went up the stairs to the Daibutsu, set Swamiji's photo at the incense bowl and chanted Vedic mantras. The chief priest of the temple offered a bouquet to Swamiji and Ms. Miwako Tanabe briefly spoke of the reason for the worship. And then the chief priest told us that the first Daibutsu had been erected only 2 years prior to Swamiji's visit. In those days the Hyogo Daibutsu was a popular landmark informing ship passengers of their arrival to Kobe, because the temple was only 200 meters from the sea. So if Swamiji had caught a glimpse of Hyogo Daibutsu from the steamship, he must have sought to visit the temple. This Daibutsu was melted down in 1944 in response to the Metal Collection Act during WWII, but a portion of the original Daibutsu metal was included in the material for the current Daibutsu. We touched the incense bowl and stone lanterns and worshiped Daibutsu-sama, believing this place to be a holy site having been visited by Swamiji. We then went to the Hyogoken Shigaku Kaikan where the afternoon session of the celebration was scheduled.

(Con't page 5)

Kobe 125th (from page 1)
The Celebration at Shigaku Kaikan
Part I

All 30 volunteers had gathered on the 4th floor hall earlier in the afternoon and had chanted mantras to pray for the success of the celebration. Maharaj said, “Take care of Swamiji. Please work for the happiness and strength of the Japanese and to spread his wonderful teachings”. Volunteers then continued with preparations and rehearsals for the programme. Swamiji’s big photographic portrait set up at stage left was beautifully decorated with a an orange cloth and flowers. The title of this celebration and Swamiji’s photo was projected on the screen at the center of the stage. Ten panels describing Swamiji’s life were displayed at the back of the audience seating section. Books, CDs and DVDs concerning Swamiji were displayed by the Vedanta Society of Japan in the lobby. At reception, programmes and the book ‘Arise and Awake.’ which is filled with encouraging words of Swamiji, were prepared. The hall opened at 1:30 p.m., approximately 100 people arrived, including Ms. Priya Darshani Bhanot, Vice-Consul, Consulate General of India, Osaka-Kobe.

At 2 p.m. the curtain rose and ‘Swami Vivekananda Visit to Japan: 125th Anniversary Celebration’ began with Ms. Atsumi Honda as English MC and Mr. Kazuichi Tajima as Japanese MC. First, a DVD, an abridged version from the movie, ‘Vivekananda by Vivekananda’ which describes Swamiji’s lifetime, played onscreen and held the audience’s rapt attention for some 15 minutes. Afterward Maharaj, Ms. Shanti Izumida and Ms. Miwako Tanabe chanted Vedic Peace mantras, and the hall chanted a Universal Prayer lead by Maharaj followed by a moment of silent prayer. In the holy atmosphere created, a bouquet to Swamiji was offered by T. Armstrong Changsan, Consul General, Consulate General of India, Osaka, Kobe and the programme proceeded with lectures on the theme of ‘Swami Vivekananda and the India-Japan Relationship’.

In his remarks regarding Swamiji’s visit to Japan, Mr. Changsan said, “The India-Japan relationship is now so close that our two prime ministers meet every year in each other’s alternate country, because Swamiji laid the foundation of this India-Japan relationship. India will make greater strides forward by our collaborative relationship with Japan”.

Mr. Tomio Mizokami, President of Kansai Japan-India Cultural Society, who was recently conferred the Padma Shri Award by the Indian Government, played music that was sung by Shekhar Sen, famous for his mono-act musical play about the life of Swamiji. He explained the context of the lyric stating that Swamiji had a spiritual experience while observing a honeycomb in Raipur at the age of fourteen. Mr. Mizokami also said that Swamiji and Tenshin Okakura had conferred, but that their opinions were not necessarily the same because Swamiji was a monk who had given up worldly desires, and on the other hand, Tenshin was a worldly person who affirmed this world.

After Mr. Mizokami’s talk, Mr. Yutaka Oasa, Representative of the Yoga Joho Station said “The thought ‘Asia is One’ by Tenshin Okakura might have been influenced by the idea of ‘oneness’ and ‘real existence is one’, as purported by Swamiji.” Mr. Oasa also said, “The spiritual exchange between India and Japan will continue forever”.

(Con’t page 6)

Kobe 125th (from page 1)

Maharaj gave a warm welcome address and said, “Being blessed by the visit of Swamiji is worthy of special mention in Japan’s sacred history”. He talked on the theme ‘Swami Vivekananda’s visit to Japan’ with photos of Japan of that era and the places Swamiji perhaps had visited in a power point presentation. The content of his talk was that in spite of Swamiji’s high appreciation of Japanese culture and it’s national traits, he recognised future problems to come with changes in Japan. Maharaj pointed out Swamiji’s ideas which would contribute to Japan, namely; 1) by imparting a genuine and broad-based spirituality, 2) by preaching the ideal of Karma Yoga; 3) the regeneration of Buddhism; 4) thereby motivating the local people; and finally, 5) promoting the India-Japan relationship. Maharaj went on to discuss these points in some detail. Finally, Maharaj said, “For Indians, on the other hand, imbibing some of the laudable Japanese character traits would be a most fitting tribute to Swamiji, Tenshin Okakura and Rabindranath Tagore—the pioneers of the Japan-India relationship”.

Maharaj’s talk brought an end to Part I of the Shigaku Kaigan celebration. Samosa, Laddu, and milk tea were then served, and many from the audience stopped by the Vedanta Bookshop set up in the lobby and visited the panel exhibition during the short 20-minute intermission.

Part II

The Cultural Programme was a music-centred programme and began at 4:20 p.m. with 15 members of the Gita and Upanishad Study Group singing two devotional songs, ‘Sangachadvam’ which praises ‘harmony’ from the Rigveda, and ‘Vivekananda Jai Ho,’ which depicts Swamiji’s various wonderful nature traits accompanied with keyboard by Ms. Shanti Izumida and guitar by Mr. Toshitake Okubo.

Next, Hiroshi Nakagawa, a Bansuri player, performed ‘Bosonte ki Shudhu’ composed by Rabindranath Tagore, who greatly respected Swamiji. Sweet and beautiful timbres spread throughout the hall and the atmosphere turned ever more peaceful and harmonious.

Then came the time to deliver the Vote of Thanks by Ms. Chieko Morioka, Co-ordinator, of the Celebration Committee. In her remarks she revealed, “We want to establish a Ramakrishna Mission Kansai Branch where we can study the harmonious teachings of the Vedanta” and announced that a fund had been set up for the establishment of this Society last year.

Finally, the MCs conveyed Maharaj’s message: “I wish you all the best in the name of Swami Vivekananda”, and the celebration ended about 5 p.m.

Just as we were leaving, one of the audience members requested to have the next programme scheduled so that he could ask his daughter to attend. Some attendees were moved to offer donations at reception as well. Everyone, including guests and performers took photos standing with the portrait of Swamiji onstage.

(Con’t page 7)

Kobe 125th (from page 1)

From 6:30 p.m. a 'Thank You Party' for the volunteers was given at the 'Hanawa Grill' inside the Shigaku Kaikan building. Maharaj, Mr. Oasa and volunteers from Kanto and Kansai, numbering 24-members, looked back on the wonderful day with thoughts and praises of Swamiji. Among the volunteers, one had been anxious regarding his work situation, but at the Port of Kobe he said he felt an energy recharging him and giving him courage; another experienced the message 'Manifest inner power' throughout the day; yet another realised nothing could be accomplished alone, but that harmony allows it.

Each of these shared impressions encouraged us and gave us mutual appreciation for each other. Maharaj said, "It is important when we do good or holy things, that we do so believing we are serving God, even if it seems difficult to put this idea into practice." We all sang 'Furusato' and Maharaj sang a song which lyric means "A bird at sea does not have to fly in various directions in a desperate search for land, if it but rests upon the mast of God's ship."

We are all thankful for this wonderful experience in celebrating Swamiji's visit to Japan by the grace of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda in harmony and prayer.

Jai! Swamiji Maharaji ki Jai!

*Translation: Atsumi Honda
Photos: Page 10*

Vivekananda Public Celebration in Tokyo 19 May 2018 **Swami Vivekananda and Japan**

by Mr. Raj Kumar Srivastava, Deputy Chief of Mission
Embassy of India, Tokyo, Japan

Let me take this opportunity to pay my respects to Swami Vivekananda by remembering some of his thoughts and my interpretations of those for living a better life. As an Engineer and science background student, when I read the works of Swami Vivekananda I found so many visionary scientific thoughts conveyed by him. This was so because many of his thoughts sound very scientific today. His ideas were way ahead of the science of his time.

Vedanta philosophy had elements of physics yet to be described in his time. The Newtonian Model was yet to be challenged by Einstein. Swami Vivekananda, through his thoughts, explained convincingly the proximity of concepts in physics and metaphysics.

Much after Swamiji's time, Einstein worked on a 'unified theory of physics' as he tried to explain big and small, the universe and an atom, by the same principles of physics. Vivekananda explained this long before him when he said that one could attain the abso-

(Con't page 8)

DCM Srivastava (from page 7)

lute truth either by looking outwardly with love, compassion and devotion - that is, the theory of big, or by focusing inwardly by meditation ultimately resulting in samadhi - the theory of small.

Another scientific thought much ahead of Swamiji's time was that time is only a measure of our thoughts, and thought being inconceivably swift, there is no limit to the speed at which we can live the life ahead. Today we see the manifestation of that when we see how life is changing so fast within our own lifespans.

For me his message for mankind is to move from darkness to light, from knowledge to consciousness. He said that the whole history of humanity is a continuous fight against the so called laws of nature. In the internal world as well, it is the fight between light and darkness.

When he talks of religion he says, the best guide in life is strength. Discard everything that weakens you, have nothing to do with it. When he talks of different forms of yoga, like Karma Yoga and Raja Yoga he mentions that balance in life is the true recognition of a yogi. Too much of anything is not a characteristic of a yogi. He said that when you judge man and woman judge them by the standard of their respective greatness.

One of the civilizational connects between India and Japan is of our common Buddhist heritage. Comparing Hinduism and Buddhism he had said that Hinduism cannot live without Buddhism, nor Buddhism without Hinduism. The heart of Buddhism and the brain and philosophy of Hinduism together give strength to Indian Civilization.

I believe Swami Vivekananda would be happy to see the growing partnership between India and Japan in the brief 125 years since his visit to Japan.

Thank you!

Thought of the Month

"Good habits formed at youth
make all the difference."

- Aristotle

Ms .Miwako Tanabe reports on the 4th Satsanga meeting of Osaka Benkyokai

Date: 24 March 2018 (Sat) 17:45~21:00

Place : Indian Restaurant Ashoka (Umeda, Osaka)

Participants: Swami Medhasanandaji and 25 members of the Bhagavad Gita and Upanishad Study Group, Osaka

(Con't page 9)

Osaka Benkyokai (from page 8)

The purpose of the Satsanga meeting was to enjoy holy company with Swami Medhasananda (Maharaj) and to connect with each other. These purposes were satisfied in a relaxed atmosphere.

The participants were not only from the Kansai area, but also from Shikoku, Nagoya and Tokyo. Some joined the meeting with family members.

The speeches of the participants were very interesting and inspired me, and I appreciated their participation. One speaker told us about her experience with Karma Yoga. She told us how she came across the idea and the practice method of Karma Yoga and said she found dirty parts of her mind through practicing Karma Yoga. To overcome such weakness, she learned to surrender herself to the will of God. She said she is thankful for those experiences now. I was so impressed with her speech that it made me deeply consider and superimpose her experiences with my own.

We then held a Q&A corner about India and Indian culture as a new feature of our meetings.

Later some asked about feelings of doubt regarding their daily life and practice. For example:

Q: Should we be vegetarian? Which point we should care about our food?

A: Vegetarian or non-vegetarian is not the criteria of good or bad. The criteria should be whether our mind is pure or not. But we should exercise control over our mind regarding food, such as not eating too much and not eating meat every day.

Maharaj also pointed out that eating is not only what we consume by mouth, but also from our eyes and ears; what we see, what we hear. Therefore, we should be careful about this too.

At the Osaka Benkyokai, we can have the great opportunity to learn of and practice the teachings of scriptures through these kinds of meetings. I realize this whenever we have our meetings. I appreciate everyone who inspires me and gives me opportunities to grow spiritually.

Translation by Atsumi Honda

(Photographs of this Satsanga were published in the April 2018 issue of 'The Vedanta Kyokai'.

Kobe Celebrates 125th Anniversary of Swamiji's Visit to Japan



Port of Kobe



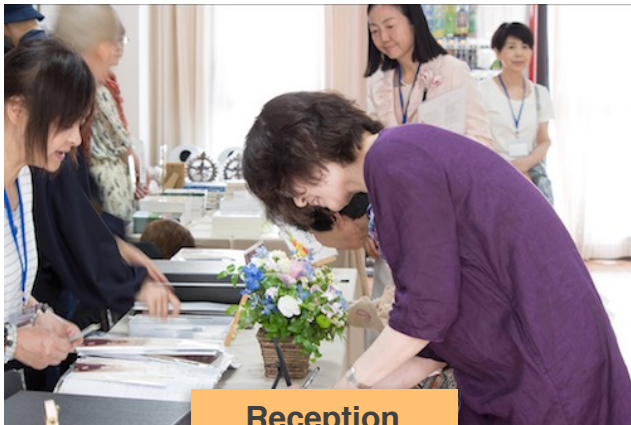
Hyogo Daibutsu





Shigaku Kaikan Speakers

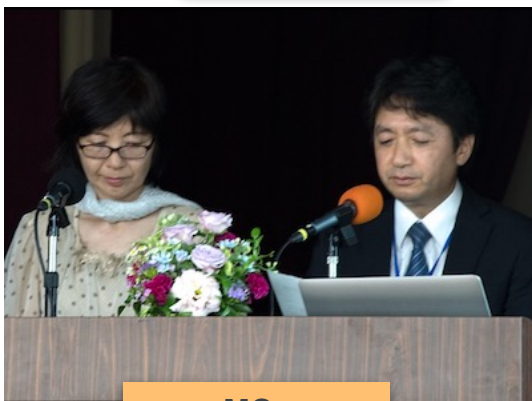
Mr. T. Armstrong Changsan / Prof. Tomio Mizokami / Mr. Yutaka Oasa



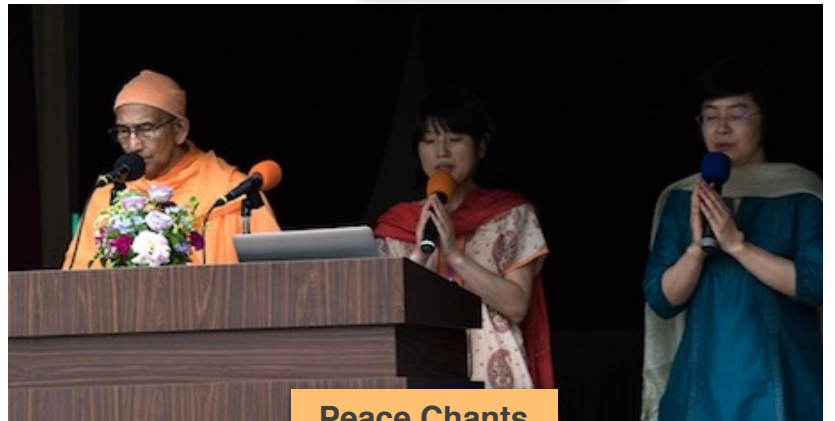
Reception



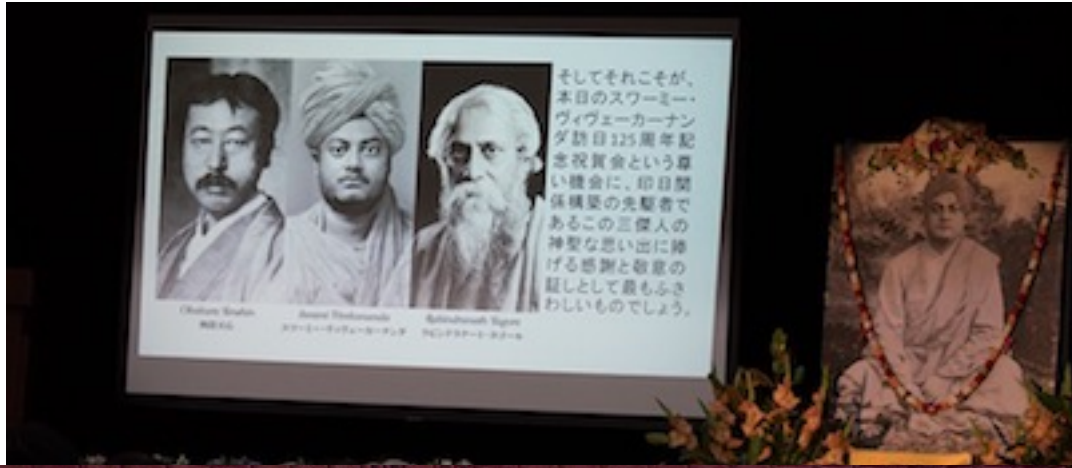
Books



MCs



Peace Chants



• 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.

From 'Dipika'- A Sri Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa publication

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