



SEPTEMBER 2018 - Volume 16 Number 09

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

October 2018
Calendar

Birthdays

**Swami
Abhedananda**
Wednesday, 3 Oct

**Swami
Akhandananda**
Saturday, 8 Sep

Zushi Events

**Swami
Medhasananda**
visits India from 26
Sep to 23 Oct.

26th (Fri)

Nara Narayan
Service to the homeless
Sato: <urara5599@
gmail.com>

27th (Sat)

Yamagata Satsanga
Contact Takahashi
023-645-3282

28th (Sun)

Satsanga in Sendai
Contact <miyadevi@
m6.gyao.ne.jp>

**Every Saturday
Yoga-Asana Class**
Zushi Annexe (10:45)
Hanari 080-6702-2308



✧ Thus Spake ✧

"When the flower blooms, the bees come uninvited."

- Sri Ramakrishna

"By their fruits you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?"

- Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:16)

Zushi August Retreat 2018 'Ananda' - PART I A talk by Swami Medhasananda

Today's theme is Ananda. When we translate 'ananda' into Japanese, there are translations such as 'tanoshimi', 'yorokobi' (joy), 'kairaku' (pleasure) and 'shifuku' (bliss). In spiritual talks, ananda is normally translated into 'shifuku' in Japanese. I thought I should explain as tanoshimi (joy) first, because you will be able to have the image of 'tanoshimi' immediately, as you have all experienced 'tanoshimi' in your life.

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Ananda (from page 1)

Who Seeks Joy

"Everyone wants joy. Everyone seeks joy. From the very young to the very old; from Japanese to Indians; Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims; everyone in the world wants joy. And not only human beings, but animals too seek joy, do they not? They too enjoy eating well, which is quite evident.

So we love joy; We want joy; we seek joy. However, that which gives us joy varies from person to person. People love hobbies, some love hiking, while others love music. Why does everyone love joy, want joy and seek joy? This is a simple question? Why does everyone want this? We can say the mind prompts our participation in enjoyments, and indulge in various psychological discussions on the causes and effects. More simply, however, we can say that this is the very nature of the mind; that the mind works in that way.

More deeply, the nature of mind is connected with the nature of the soul. In Hindu philosophy the basis of the mind is the soul, and the very nature of that soul is 'Sat Chit Ananda' or Absolute Existence, Absolute Consciousness and Absolute Bliss. So the soul's blissful nature induces our mind to seek joy; to get joy; to love joy.

Sensual Joy

Now let us examine what types of joy everyone seeks? The common types of joy people seek are on the sense level, that is, enjoyments of the senses; for example, the eyes (scenery), the ears (music), the palate (taste), the skin (touch) and nose (smell). In

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Ananda (from page 2)

Japanese we can summarise these as *kairaku*, or pleasures. Simply stated, almost everyone is seeking some sort of pleasure. There are different levels or types of joy too; mental joy or intellectual joy, and more deeply still, there is spiritual joy. Most people do not seek out mental or intellectual joys, and fewer still seek out spiritual joy.

As we have already observed, the joys most people pursue are sense pleasures, but what is the result of such pleasure pursuits? Children are bereft of experience, but as we mature we learn from experiences. For example, we know from our ordinary experiences that ordinary enjoyments have a beginning and also an end.

Experience also teaches us that what at first brings us joy, will later mostly bring us sadness. In fact, it is said that for every every ounce (28.35gm) of pleasure, there is a pound (453.60gm) of pain. So why do we not learn from experience and constantly pursue the same result and suffer? What is the fun of continuing if the result is more pain and less joy?

Expectant Pleasure

Simply stated 'expectant pleasure' is the driving motivator. The mind says, 'Last time was frustrating, but next time will bring fulfillment.' In the *Mundaka Upanishad* there is the metaphor of the two birds. The two companion birds are in the same tree; one in the upper branches and one in the lower branches. On the lower branches were both sweet and bitter fruits of the tree; but the bird could not know one from the other until it ate a fruit. Eating a bitter fruit, his regret in eating the bitter fruits would soon pass and he'd try another in hopes of a sweet fruit. Disappointment followed biting into yet another bitter fruit, but again the bird tries another. So it goes from the bitter to the occasional sweet fruit, always thinking, 'The next fruit will be sweet.'

The bird does not know whether the fruits are bitter or sweet until savoured. The expectation of a sweet fruit is the motivator for suffering the bitter fruits. Likewise, we forget the unpleasant consequences in expectation of joy, because behind such wrongly founded expectations is our unbound drive for enjoyment of the senses, or in other words, sensual pleasures.

Here is an example of our fundamental drive for pleasure from Buddhist literature: A traveller entered into a forest. In that forest lived a tiger. Suddenly, the traveller realised that a tiger was approaching, and naturally, he wanted to run away. He saw a well and quickly descended into the well for safety. At the bottom of the well, however, he saw a nest of venomous snakes, so he grabbed hold of some of the vines and creepers along the walls of the well. His hands were beginning to tire of holding on and hanging between the tiger above and the snakes below. At the same time, however, he noticed that a bee hive above was dripping honey, and forgetting all the dangers of the moment, he extended his tongue to enjoy some sweet honey.

Anticipated Joy

We have accumulated many memories of sense enjoyments over many, many births, and that is why our pursuit of joy in sense pleasures is so very strong—not mental joy, not intellectual joy, not spiritual joy, but sensual joy.

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Ananda (from page 3)

Also, such joys are mostly joys of anticipation, not of reality. For example, we enjoy planning trips to India or the USA - there is a joy in anticipation of the trip. But when we actually undertake the journey, however, many troubles, many hazards can arise and spoil our joy. Another example is when we are at a food court with many restaurants to choose from, we enjoy perusing the many delicious looking images of menu items on display in glass cases, but when we finally decide and the meal arrives it is often not so enjoyable. It is all perceived joy—joy is mostly in our imagination. Whatever it is, when it actually happens we do not get so much joy from it. Not only that, it might be very different from what we expected or anticipated. Marriage, for example, brings excitement and wonderful expectations for both the young bride and groom and their families. A few years afterward we experience that the perceived joy before marriage and the actual joy after marriage do not always match.

Thought of the Month

“Folks are usually about as happy as they make their minds up to be.”

— Abraham Lincoln

The object of our pleasure always changes, too. In this connection, let me tell you a story. Once there was an old man on a train. He dropped his old wallet and a picture of Lord Krishna fell out. The fellow passengers asked him about his love of God, and the old man answered that, yes, these days he carries a picture of the Lord, but that it had not always so, and that the picture of Sri Krishna has a story behind it.

He said that as a child the first photo he carried was of his parents and he carried it for some years. Then he said as he grew up he had a cinema hero whose photo replaced that of his parents. Later he had a girlfriend, and her picture replaced that of his cinema hero, and he often enjoyed gazing at her photo. Later he married yet another girl whose photo he then kept in the wallet, and this photo gave him joy, too. Then a son was born to them, and the man replaced the photo of his wife with one of his son. This photo gave him much joy for several years, too. The boy grew up, of course, soon married and then moved away, and the old man's wife died as well and he was alone. It was when all his family members and friends had left him that he realised they were all only temporary companions and that his true eternal friend, companion and refuge was the Lord. He told the passengers that from that time on he has carried the picture of Lord Krishna in his wallet. Why does our pleasure end in suffering? Common pleasures are not genuine, they are but reflections, they are reflected. Real pleasure lies within. The pleasures we feel from outside stimuli are but reflections.

Characteristics of the Three Sukhas

There are three kinds of Sukha: Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic. Briefly, Sattvic Sukha does not come naturally and requires preparation with practice. Rajasic or Tamasic Sukha arise naturally and require no preparation. For example, under Rajasic Sukha when we go to a restaurant, eat and pay we feel happy; when we watch a good film, we feel joy. With Tamasic Sukha when we feel sleepy, we simply sleep, no special preparation is necessary for enjoying sleep.

Sattvic

In the Bhagavad Gita Chapter 18 Verse 36 we find the following words: Abhyāsād Ramate Yatra, which means that the Sattvic happiness by which all distress comes to an end can only be experienced with long practice. For example, we do not enjoy meditation when we first begin to practice it. We have to get up early, and we are still sleepy. We have to sit

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Ananda (from page 4)

straight and think of God without dozing off. It is not easy and it is not enjoyable either and many give up after starting. Two reasons for this are that it is boring and it is hard.

The Gita 18:37 also likens Sattvic Sukha to poison (viṣham iva) at first, but if we continue, it becomes like nectar. If we continue to practice for example; meditation improves, our concentration on tasks improves, and we feel more mental peace. Gita 18:37 also says ātma-buddhi-prasāda-jam, meaning that Sattvic Sukha ensues from connectedness with our Self. Hence, the origin of Sattvic Sukha is from within.

Rajasic

In the Gita 18:38 the nature of Rajasic Sukha has been explained. It says it has two features. First it originates when our senses come in contact with an object, that such joy that first appears sweet like nectar, finally turns bitter like poison threatening our life.

Tamasic

In the Gita 18:39 we find that the Tamasic Sukha nidrālasya (sleep and indolence) originates in mistakes, delusion, and non-performance of duties. When we decide to take the day off it is laziness. Sometimes we do not want to do anything but sleep all day. We don't want to work; we want to ignore our obligations. These are Tamasic Sukha.

(Translated by Ms Atsumi Honda)

End Part I - Part II will be presented in our November Issue.

Nagoya Satsanga at Tokugenji Temple in Nagoya City





The Nihon Yoga Ryohoshi Kyokai Aigi Shibu (The Japan Association of Yoga Therapists Aigi Branch) held a satsanga at Tokugenji Temple in Nagoya City on 23 June, from 10:45am to 4pm, where Swami Medhasananda (Maharaj) was invited to give a discourse. Thirty-five people attended. The following is an excerpt from the report on the event provided by Ms Yuri Maeno, a branch member.

Maharaj discussed three different topics in his discourse. He explained what specific matters we should meditate on and how successful meditation impacts us. Regarding "How to Meditate", he highlighted the importance of being connected to God and what attitude we should assume towards work found in the "Bhagavad Gita". In the discussion of the 3rd topic "Pratyahara: Control of Senses and the Mind", he talked in detail about Ashtanga Yoga or the Eightfold Yoga, in particular its fifth component Pratyahara, including what Pratyahara means by breaking down the name.

The question and answer session followed the discourse and attendees gave questions such as how they can concentrate better in meditation and how they can calm their mind down and keep it calm.

Satsanga at 'Sarasya' in Mitaka, Tokyo
A report by Ms. Sakae Machida

Hamamatsu Satsanga

On 26 August, Maharaj gave a discourse on the topic "Who am I?" and answered questions at the following Q&A session at the satsanga which the Japan Association of Yoga Therapists held at Hamamatsu City Fukushi Koryu (welfare and networking) Centre in Shizuoka Prefecture from 1:30pm and 4:30pm. The following is an excerpt from the talk summary by Ms Akiko Yamauchi and Noriko Kato.

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Hamamatsu Satsanga (from page 6)

A musk deer keeps running about looking for the source of wonderful scent in the forest without knowing the fact that the source is inside it. Likewise, we have the wrong understanding that the source of pleasure and joy, real intelligence and freedom exist outside us. The answer to "Who am I?" is, we are the soul. The soul is the true nature of "me" and it is eternal, absolute reality and the infinite source of bliss. If we have realised our true nature, we can live a life full of bliss.

The important points to note are taking back our attention from the outer world and directing it to the inner world; searching for our real nature; and seeking bliss from inside us, not outside us.

Imabari, Ehime Prefecture September 2018 Satsanga Report Summary report by Ms. Noriko Shioji

We held a retreat Imabari City on September 8th and 9th. This was the seventh time for Swami Medhasananda (Maharaj) to come to Ehime Prefecture and visit our group.

About 40 people attended from 16:00 on the 8th and participated in a meditation led by Maharaj. He then gave a talk on 'The Purpose of Living' at a clean and quiet city facility in the suburbs. Many people had come from outside Ehime Prefecture despite heavy rain forecasts and warnings.

On the 9th about 24 people attended the morning worship with meditation from 05:00 and reading from scripture. I led some light yoga exercises. It had become customary to take a walk with Maharaj after breakfast, but this time we could not do so because of the rain.

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Imabari (from page 7)

The lecture was divided into two parts at 10: 00 and at 14:00, and we learned about "Asana Pranayama". In discussing Ashtanga, the eightfold path, of Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, Maharaj gave easy to understand descriptions of these eight steps in living a purposeful life. It was interesting to all those studying yoga and the participants listened seriously. If one knows the purpose behind a practice, one can pursue that practice more seriously. I think that many participants took Maharaj's words to heart.

Maharaj left at 4:30pm for the Zentsuji Temple in Kagawa Prefecture, where the Buddhist monk, Kukai (Kōbō-Daishi 774~835), is said to have been born and spent his childhood. I'm glad that Maharaj is getting to know more about Shikoku and enjoying being in this area.

I appreciate the many people who came to Ehime and Imabari City from distant locations. Our deep appreciation and thanks to Maharaji, too, for visiting us in Imabari seven times thus far.



• A Story to Remember •

The Guru and the Thief

There was an young disciple who would often steal from his brother monks, he would steal their money, he would steal small things in the monastery. The other monks complained about him to their teacher "Master! he steals things from us, please advise him"

The wise one said "Give him some time, he will learn. I'll talk to him", wise one called the young disciple after everyone had left "These things are puny, only right practice will give you what you crave for, work hard on your practice, stop stealing things.

The young monk prostrated before the wise one in respect and left, he was ashamed of his habit, he was determined to try and stop his habit. He was an intelligent and good person, like most people who come on the path, but it was too difficult for him to change his mental pattern (isn't it often difficult for everyone).

Few days passed without any trouble, but he could not resist the temptation for long, he fell and unfortunately for him he was caught again, monks paraded again to the wise one taking the culprit along, the wise one dismissed them saying "Give him some time he will learn".

They caught him few more times and brought him in front of the wise one for justice, he would simply dismiss them saying "Don't mind him, do your practices. He will learn to behave". The monks couldn't understand why the Guru tolerated such behavior and wouldn't send him out of monastery.

Then it happened once again and this time the monks were determined—they wanted a permanent decision from the Guru's part. They said in chorus "Master we can't take it anymore, you can either keep us here or keep this thief, but we will not stay here if he stays".

"Alright then, you all may leave. I'm not going to abandon him." came the reply, monks were all surprised at the unexpected answer.

"Oh master! O master! Please" pleaded the disciples in gentle voice.

"You are all good disciples, you will get admission into any monastery. But he won't be accepted anywhere else, I'm not going to leave him." said the compassionate one.

The young monk who was watching all this commotion was touched by the compassion of the great one, his resolve was so strong that he gave up stealing thereafter for good.

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