



MAY 2021 -VOLUME 19 NUMBER 05

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

JUNE 2021
Calendar



Birthdays

There are no birthdays of note according to the Vishuddha Siddhanta Almanac

Zushi Events

COVID restrictions have been reimposed by the Japanese government, and precautions are in place. Our monthly programmes and classes will continue with advised precautions observed.

Details on page 02!



✧ Thus Spake ✧

"Happiness presents itself before man wearing the crown of sorrow on its head. He who welcomes it must also welcome sorrow."

- Swami Vivekanandaji

"Ignorance produces perishable results that rise with the dawn and die with the dusk."

- Sri Shankaracharya

May Zushi Monthly Retreat 2021

The Teachings of Sri Chaitanya Deva

A talk by Swami Medhasanandaji

Our theme today are the teachings of Sri Chaitanya Deva, the 15th century saint of Bengal. There is a relevant portion in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* describing Sri Ramakrishna's visit to Calcutta to see a play at the Star Theatre entitled *Chaitanyalila*, based on accounts of Sri Chaitanya's life and written by Girish Chandra Ghosh.

Let us read a portion from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Chapter 28, At the Star Theatre (1):

(con't page 5)

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Vedanta Society of Japan Events for JUNE 2021

With a rapid rise in new COVID-19 infections, the government has once again imposed a state of emergency for residents of the Tokyo and Osaka areas. The Government of Japan urged residents to take all possible precautions against the spread of COVID-19, including travel, social distancing, mask wearing, and avoiding crowded areas.

As such, the Vedanta Society of Japan will continue to provide live-stream, video, and Zoom participation as noted in the schedule below. Attendance to programmes is restricted, so contact us if you wish to attend any of the programmes.

Swami Medhasananda, President
Vedanta Society of Japan

JUNE 2021 Calendar of Programmes

2nd (Wed) June - Zoom only - Video uploaded later

Weekly Upanishad Study Class

8:30 ~9:15 (in Japanese only)

NEW VENUE and DATE 6th (Sun) June - Video later

Annual Swami Vivekananda Public 158th Birth Anniversary Celebration

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose 125th Birth Anniversary Celebration

TKP Garden City Yokohama 2F Hall B / Near Yokohama Station

3-1 Kinkōchō, Kanagawa-ku, Yokohama-shi, Kanagawa-ken 221-0056

FOR MORE DETAILS from page 3

12th (Sat) June Video uploaded later

Bhagavad Gita Study Class at the Indian Embassy

10:30 ~12:00 (In Japanese only)

13th (Sun) June - Live-streaming & Zoom

Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna Study Class

14:00 ~16:00 (in Japanese only)

* For Zoom contact: zoom.nvk@gmail.com

16th (Wed) June - Zoom

Weekly Upanishad Study Class

8:30 ~9:15 (in Japanese only)

20th (Sun) June - Live-streaming (Bi-lingua)

Monthly Zushi Retreat

Lord Buddha Birth Celebration

AM Session - 10:30 - Live-streaming

PM Session Talk - 14:30 - Live-streaming (Bi-lingua)

23rd (Wed) June - Zoom

Weekly Upanishad Study Class

8:30 ~9:15 (in Japanese only)



New Venue: **YOKOHAMA**
New Date: **6th JUNE**
New Registration: **1st to 3rd June**

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: 158th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE: 125th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Date: Sunday, 6th June, 2021. 2:00 p.m.- 4 p.m. (Hall opens at 1:30 p.m.)

スワミー・ヴィヴェーカーナンダ第158回生誕記念祝賀会
ネタージ・スバース・チャンドラ・ボシュ第125回生誕記念祝賀会

日 時：2021年6月6日（日）午後2時～4時（開場午後1時半）

Venue: TKP Garden City Yokohama 2F Hall B : 3-1 Kinko-cho, Kanagawa-ku, Yokohama

Speech: 'Swami Vivekananda : Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose'

場 所：TKP ガーデンシティ横浜2階ホールB：横浜市神奈川区金港町3-1

スピーチ：「スワミー・ヴィヴェーカーナンダ：ネタージ・スバース・チャンドラ・ボシュについて」

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: 158th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE: 125th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION スワミー・ヴィヴェーカーナンダ第158回生誕記念祝賀会 ネタージ・スバース・チャンドラ・ボシュ第125回生誕記念祝賀会



Jointly organised by Vedanta Society of Japan & Embassy of India, Tokyo
共催：日本ヴェーダ協会及び在京インド大使館
You are cordially invited to attend. 心よりご参加くださいますよう謹んでご案内申し上げます。



Date: Sunday, 6th June, 2021. 2:00 p.m.-4 p.m. (Hall opens at 1:30 p.m.)
Venue: TKP Garden City Yokohama 2F Hall B : 3-1 Kinko-cho, Kanagawa-ku, Yokohama
Programme highlight: Theme of the speech : 'Swami Vivekananda : Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose' ;
Release of a book : India-Japan Relationship - Swami Vivekananda and Okakura Tenshin

日時: 2021年6月6日(日) 午後2時~4時 (開場午後1時半)

場所: TKP ガーデンシティ横浜 2階ホールB: 横浜市神奈川区金港町3-1

主なプログラム: スピーチのテーマ: 「スワミー・ヴィヴェーカーナンダ: ネタージ・スバース・チャンドラ・ボシュについて」、
新刊リリース「(洋書) [日本語名] インドと日本の関係 - スワミー・ヴィヴェーカーナンダと岡倉天心」

Speakers 講演者



H. E. Mr. Sanjay Kumar Verma
Ambassador of India to Japan
サンジェイ・クマール・ヴァルマ閣下
駐日インド大使



Dr. Tomohiko Taniguchi
Professor, Keio University
谷口 智彦博士
慶應義塾大学教授



Mr. Takeyuki Tanaka
Writer and Visiting Resercher, Centre for
South Asian Studies, Gifu Women's University
田中 健之氏
岐阜女子大学南アジア研究センター特別研究員

Exhibition: Books on Hinduism, Meditation, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda in Japanese and English.
Light snacks will be distributed to carry home.

***No Admission charge.**

展示物: ヒンドウイズム、瞑想、ラーマクリシュナ、ヴィヴェーカーナンダに関する日・英両語による書籍が展示されます。
軽食をお出しますので、自宅へお持ち帰りください。

※入場は無料です。

Important notes

1. Prior registration for admission is required. Hence please confirm your attendance by sending a mail to vivekanandacel2021@gmail.com by June 3, 2021.
 2. Precautions for using the hall:
 - Please avoid attending the programme if you have/had any symptoms of cough, fever in recent days.
 - Body temperature will be measured at the entry point.
 - Social distancing rules will be implemented.
 - Wearing a mask is mandatory.
 - Sterilizing hands at the entry point is also mandatory.
 - Name, address, contact telephone/mobile number of all the visitors will be recorded.
 - No food and drinks will be allowed inside the hall.
- Your cooperation is earnestly solicited. Thank you.

ご来場に際してのお願い

1. ご参加いただくには事前登録が必要です。2021年6月3日までにEメール vivekanandacel2021@gmail.com にて、ご来場者の人数をご予約ください。
 2. ホールのご利用については以下の通りご協力をお願いいたします。
 - 過去数日以内を含め、発熱、せきの症状がある方はご来場をご遠慮ください。
 - 会場の入口で検温します。
 - ソーシャル・ディスタンス (2m) を確保してください。
 - マスクを必ずご着用ください。
 - 会場の入口で手指の消毒を行ってください。
 - ご来場者全員のお名前、ご住所、お電話番号を記録させていただきます。
 - 会場内での飲食は禁止されています。
- どうぞよろしくお願い申し上げます。ありがとうございました。

Map of TKP Garden City Yokohama



For further details, please call:

Swami Medhasananda

(046)873-0428

Mr. S. Kar (045)264-4918

Mr. S. Brahma (03)3816-6075

Office Address: Nippon Vedanta

Kyokai, 4-18-1 Hisagi Zushi-shi,

Kanagawa-ken 249-0001, Phone

(046)873-0428, Fax (046)873-0592

TKP ガーデンシティ横浜地図



より詳しい情報を知りたい方は、

ここにお問い合わせ下さい:

スワミー・メダサーナンダ

249-0001 神奈川県逗子市久木

4-18-1

Tel : 046-873-0428

Fax : 046-873-0592

Sri Chaitanya (from page 1)

Listening to the music, the Master (Sri Ramakrishna) went into samadhi. The curtain fell and the orchestra played on.

A new scene: Srivas and other devotees are engaged in conversation in front of Advaita's house. Mukunda sings:

*Sleep no more! How long will you lie
In maya's slumber locked, O mind?
Who are you? Why have you been born?
Forgotten is your own true Self.
O mind, unclose your eyes at last
And wake yourself from evil dreams;
A fool you are to bind yourself
So to the passing shows of life,
When in you lives Eternal Bliss.
Come out of the gloom, O foolish mind!
Come out and hail the rising Sun!*

Sri Ramakrishna praised the voice of the singer highly.

Another scene: Nimai is staying at home. Srivas comes to visit him. First he meets Sachi. The mother weeps and says: "My son doesn't attend to his household duties. My eldest son, Viswarupa, has renounced the world, and my heart has ached ever since. Now I fear that Nimai will follow in his steps."

Nimai arrives. Sachi says to Srivas: "Look at him. Tears run down his cheeks and breast. Tell, tell me how I can free him from these notions."

At the sight of Srivas, Nimai clings to his feet and says, with eyes full of tears: "Ah me! Revered sir, I have not yet attained devotion to Krishna. Futile is this wretched life! Tell me, sir, where is Krishna? Where shall I find Krishna? Give me the dust of your feet with your blessing, that I may realize the Blue One with the garland of wild-flowers hanging about His neck."

Sri Ramakrishna looked at M. He was eager to say something but he could not. His voice was choked with emotion; the tears ran down his cheeks; with unmoving eyes he watched Nimai clinging to Srivas's feet and saying, "Sir, I have not yet attained devotion to Krishna."

Nimai has opened a school, but he cannot teach the students any longer. Gangadas, his former teacher, comes to persuade him to direct his attention to his worldly duties. He says to Srivas: "Listen, Srivas! We are brahmins, too, and devoted to the worship of Vishnu. But you people are ruining Nimai's worldly prospects."

MASTER (to M.): "That is the advice of the worldly-wise: Do 'this' as well as 'that'. When the worldly man teaches spirituality he always advises a compromise between the world and God."

M: "Yes, sir. That is true."

Gangadas continues his argument with Nimai. He says: "Nimai, undoubtedly you are versed in the scriptures. Reason with me. Explain to me if any other duty is superior to worldly duties. You are a householder. Why disregard the duties of a householder and follow others' duties?"

MASTER (to M.): "Did you notice? He's trying to persuade Nimai to make a compromise."

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Sri Chaitanya (from page 5)

M: "Yes, sir."

Nimai says to Gangadas: "I am not wilfully indifferent to a householder's duties. On the contrary, it is my desire to hold to all sides. But, revered sir, I don't know what it is that draws me on. I don't know what to do. I want to cling to the shore but I cannot. My soul wanders away. I am helpless. My soul constantly wants to plunge headlong into the boundless Ocean."

MASTER: "Ah me!"

The scene changes: Nityananda has arrived at Navadvip. After a search he meets Nimai, who, in turn, has been seeking him. When they meet, Nimai says to him: "Blessed is my life! Fulfilled is my dream! You visited me in a dream and then disappeared."

The Master said in a voice choked with emotion, "Nimai said he had seen him in a dream."

Nimai is in an ecstatic mood and becomes engaged in conversation with Advaita, Srivas, Haridas, and other devotees. Nitai sings a song suited to Nimai's mood:

*Where is Krishna? Where is my Krishna?
He is not in the grove, dear friends.
Give me Krishna! Bring me my Krishna!
Radha's heart knows naught but Him.*

At this song Sri Ramakrishna went into samadhi. He remained in that state a long time.

The Impact of Sri Chaitanya

Sri Chaitanya's birthplace was in Nabadwip, a small town in Bengal. He was born in 1485 and on the occasion of Sri Chaitanya Deva's 500th birth anniversary in 1985 I had the good fortune to visit the city of Nabadwip. By then the little town had grown into a city, and though politically influenced by communism, the whole city was in a festive mood. The streets were strewn in the red powder used during Spring festivals, and the people were dancing and singing the glories of the Lord Hari and Lord Sri Chaitanya with cymbals and drums in accompaniment. It was unbelievable to witness the whole city turned into a mart of joy, song, dance, devotion and festivity.

Though Sri Chaitanya only lived for some forty-eight years, his impact on the Indian states of Bengal, Assam, Orissa, and Manipur, was tremendous. He was the founder of the Bengal School of Vaishnavism. The devotees of Lord Vishnu are called Vaishnavas, and there are various sects of Vaishnavism such as Ramanuja, Madhvacharya and others, but Sri Chaitanya founded the Bengal School of Vaishnavism or Gaudiya Vaishnavism. Sri Chaitanya also had a great impact on the culture, art, architecture, literature and music of Bengal and of the other states mentioned.

The Cultural Impact

There are many beautiful biographies written about Sri Chaitanya in Bengali and other languages. Dramas were also composed on his life, and there are also many songs in praise of him. There were many paintings of Sri Chaitanya, too. There was one song I sang earlier today featuring his pre-monastic name Gauranga, or Gaura for short. There is a song which remains quite popular in Bengal, in which the name Gauranga is sung repeatedly. Let me sing a little of this song again now:

(con't page 7)

*Bhaja Gaurāṅga kaha Gaurāṅga laha Gaurāṅgera nāma re!
Je jan Gaurāṅga bhaje, sei (hay) āmāra prāṇa re!!*

The meaning of this lyric is:

O' devotees, take the name of Gauranga,
Chant the name of Gauranga, meditate on the name of Gauranga.
Anyone who sings the name of Gauranga is very dear to my heart

Those of you who have read through *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* will recall the many instances that Sri Ramakrishna mentions Sri Chaitanya, or Gauranga, illustrating many of his ideas or giving examples from his life. Lots of sub-references to Sri Chaitanya are found in *The Gospel* as well.

Sri Chaitanya would lead kirtan parties wherein many devotees would participate singing and dancing with drums and cymbals. Once Sri Ramakrishna wanted to have the vision and experience of a kirtan party led by Sri Chaitanya, and he did have the vision of Sri Chaitanya leading a kirtan party of multitudes from the Panchavati to the Kali Temple of Dakshineswar. The vision was described as thousands and thousands of people being led by Sri Chaitanya and his friend and disciple Nityananda moving slowly with raised arms swaying back and forth. In His vision Sri Ramakrishna had also recognised Master Mahashay (M) and Balaram Bose included in the procession, both of whom He believed had been followers of Sri Chaitanya in former births.

The Maha Mantra

Another song we hear is, “Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare, Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama, Rama, Hare, Hare” The name of the Lord is repeated 16 times in this song although the melodies may vary somewhat the lyric is the same. It is sometimes referred to as the ‘Maha Mantra’. Vaishnavas often repeat this mantra as it is one of the most important practices of the worshippers of Lord Vishnu. Perhaps you have seen some ISKCON members with their right hands in their little mala (rosary) bags telling their beads and chanting this mantra both in private and in public. They continue repeating on and on “Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare, Hare, Hare Rama, etc.” This chanting was introduced by Sri Chaitanya.

This mantra chant was once confined to areas of Bengal, Assam, Odisha, Manipur, but nowadays it has become global through ISKCON, International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Even in the streets of New York City during Ratha Yatra or the Car festival associated with Lord Jagannath, ISKCON devotees can be seen pulling a chariot and singing with raised arms chanting, “Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare, Hare, etc.” At one time this became the focus of the Western media attention because it was such a unique sight. Seeing caucasians dressed like Indian devotees dancing with arms raised down the streets of New York singing “Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare, Hare, etc.” was indeed, something previously unseen. Being a demonstration of devotion to God was beside the point, it was a media worthy attraction to broadcast to a wide audience.

• Thought of the Month •

“If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything.”

— Mark Twain

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Background to the Advent of Sri Chaitanya

What was the background behind Sri Chaitanya's cultivation of devotion to Sri Krishna? At that time the rulers of India were Muslims and there was persecution of Hindus by Muslims. Hindus feared and hated Muslims and Muslims hated Hindus. Among Hindu society there were so many castes, and people of upper castes disdained those of lower castes and would not even allow themselves to be touched by some castes. As such, many kinds of hatred and discrimination prevailed in society. Then again, in the name of religion many practices served only as the means for gratification of the senses. And there were some religious practitioners who were only interested in obtaining occult powers. Vedanta philosophy was only understood in a narrow sense and it had been reduced to a dry philosophy. So both in a societal and a religious sense the conditions in India had become deplorable. It was in this background of a societal rift and the practice of irreligion in the name of religion that Sri Chaitanya Deva was born in Bengal in 1485.

The Childhood of Chaitanya

Nabadwip, the town where he was born was renowned for the study of scripture and philosophy, especially Nyāya philosophy. There are six schools of Indian philosophy, Nyāya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā and Vedanta. The sage Gautama had developed the Nyāya philosophy and Bengali scholars of Sanskrit later founded a new school of Nyāya known as Navya-Nyāya, or Neo-Logical darśana.

Chaitanya was the second son born to a poor Brahmin family, but though they were poor, they were very devoted to the Lord. His mother's name was Sachi Devi and his father's name was Jagannath Mishra. Their first born son, Viśhvarūpa, grew to be a scholar of scripture, but eventually decided it would not do to remain a mere scholar, and that the only way to realise the Truth was to renounce family life and the world, so he left the household to become a monk. This made the parents very sad, but then Chaitanya was born. The fair complexioned and handsome boy was named Vishambhara at birth, but was later known by his nickname, Nimai, as tradition says he was born under a Neem Tree. He was also called Gaur or Gauranga (one whose body is very fair) because of his fair complexion.

Childhood Pranks

He was a very intelligent and naughty child, which brings to mind stories of both Sri Krishna and Swami Vivekananda's mischievous childhoods. These youngsters were similar in this sense—their childhood pranks and mischievous behaviours. The banks of the Ganga was a great playground for young Nimai, who would always enlist his friends in mischief too. One example of this is that Nabadwip is situated on the banks of the Ganga River, and as you know Hindus are very fond of the Ganga, they bathe there, worship there, make offerings there, and sit on its banks and meditate on the Lord.

Life in villages along the Ganga was centred on the banks of the flowing Ganga, much like life in Japan is centred on its coastlines and the sea. Some people wade waist deep into the river, close their eyes and chant their mantra with full concentration. Nimai and his friends would spot such worshippers, quietly enter the river, and pull on their legs. This disturbance would anger the worshippers considerably. This was one play of Nimai and friends.

Another example is that some worshippers would bring trays of specially prepared food offerings to the Lord and close their eyes imagining the Lord partaking of their offering. Instead,

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their eyes would open to see not the Lord, but apparently Nimai and friends eating their offerings and running away. However, out of their ignorance they could not recognise it was Nimai, the Lord incarnate, to whom they were offering their food.

Yet another example of Nimai's pranks would happen when mothers would come to bathe in the Ganga with their babies. These babies would be left swaddled nearby on the riverbank while the mothers would bathe. Nimai and friends would sneak up and give these sleeping babies a jolt or a scare to set them crying, bringing the angry mothers out of the river to attend to the tears of babies.

We know Sri Krishna's mother, Yashoda, too, would constantly get complaints from neighbours about young Gopala's bad behaviour, his teasing and his pranks. Finally, Nimai's mother, Sachi, could not bring about any change in Nimai's behaviour with scoldings or disciplines, so it was decided to place the boy in a nursery or preschool.

Nimai Pandit

Nimai's intelligence was exceptional and he progressed rapidly in his studies. This was reported to Nimai's parents, but because their first son had become a scholar only to renounce the world, they worried that Nimai might follow in his brother's footsteps and withdrew him from school. At this Nimai's mischievousness only escalated and his mother constantly heard complaints from the townspeople. The parents reasoned that if they left Nimai to his own devices, soon no one would be able to control him, so the exacerbated parents put Nimai back into school and he, too, became a great scholar of scripture. At the age of sixteen he opened his own school or 'Tol' (place of learning). He became so famous as a scholar and teacher that students from other parts of the country would come to study with him.

There were other scholars whose fame was in their proficiency in arguing points of scripture. There was once such a system wherein one's greatness as a scholar would be proclaimed by his ability to defeat another in an argument regarding some point of scripture. Some scholars even sought name and fame in this way and would come to Nabadwip, renown as a seat of learning, to debate the scholars of Nabadwip. When scholars would arrive with this intention, Nimai would accept these challenges, but none of these scholars could defeat Nimai. In this way Nimai's, or Gauranga's, fame became widespread.

Devotional Practice Challenged

The renown Nimai Pandit then married a very beautiful girl named Lakshmi, but once while he was away from home he learned that his wife had been bitten by a snake and died. Then his father also passed away. These two instances affected him greatly and he began to consider the emptiness, the unreality, and the evanescence of this world. His parents had been devout and slowly his fondness for God increased. He then met a monk named Isvara Puri, a sannyasin of the Dashanami sect founded by Adi Shankara, who initiated Nimai in the name of Lord Krishna. Since that time he showed ever more interest in chanting the name of Krishna than in the teaching of scripture. Around him were other like-minded devotees of Sri Krishna, and Gauranga would lead them in chanting Lord Hari's name.

There were others, however, who did not approve of Gauranga's style of devotion, the loud repetitive voices, cymbals and drums into the night that disturbed their sleep. They brought allegations and complaints about this behaviour to the local Muslim ruler, Chand Kazi, who ruled that no one be allowed to perform kirtan in the streets. Normally, the common people would be afraid to disobey such an edict, but Gauranga disagreed saying that they were not engaged in

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any immoral or unethical activity, and they were chanting the name of the Lord, which should not be censured.

He then organised a very big kirtan party with a multitude of people accompanied by cymbals and drums, and on the appointed day Gauranga led a great kirtan party, chanting in a slow procession toward the residence of the ruler Kazi. When Kazi heard the roar of the kirtan party growing louder as it approached, he grew frightened and hid himself in the residence. Gauranga brought the procession to a halt in front of the residence and called for Kazi in a friendly way, saying he just wanted to say hello and greet him; that there was no question of a threat against him; and that Gauranga only sought to offer his greetings to Kazi.

Kazi came out and the two men met. Kazi was very impressed with Gauranga's humble and sweet words, and his explanation that kirtan was never intended to cause harm to anyone and is just the chanting of the name of the Lord. Gauranga explained, "The Lord you call 'Allah' is the same Lord we call 'Hari', they are one and the same." Gauranga's presence, attitude, humility, and beautiful simplicity in stating his case so impressed Kazi that he rescinded his edict, and he himself became an admirer of Gauranga.

Since Gauranga was quite young when he lost his first wife, his mother wanted him to remarry and a suitable girl was found in a young lady named Vishnupriya. She was also very devoted to the Lord. So time passed with Gauranga living with his mother and wife, teaching a little and spending more and more time in chanting with others and in giving spiritual instruction.

Chaitanya Renounces

Suddenly the thought crossed his mind, "I am living a householder's life along with my mother and young wife, and giving spiritual instructions which include the idea of renunciation ... I also possess name and fame as a scriptural scholar ... so how can my spiritual instructions have any real impact on the people?" He worried that people would think that his instructions would have the effect of saying, 'if one wants to live a devoted spiritual life to know God, one may do so while at the same time enjoying the life of a householder. I may talk of renunciation, while secretly I enjoy everything in life which one craves for.' When this thought came to him, Gauranga began to seriously consider renouncing the world and becoming a monk as his elder brother had done.

He knew the pain this would cause his mother and his young bride. First of all his mother had lost her first born when he became a monk, and then her husband had passed away, should he renounce the world, too, his mother and his wife would be devastated. Finally, he decided to become a monk, and when his mother learned of this she fainted away senseless. Slowly Nimai pleaded with his mother that if she did not give her permission and made him stay that he would suffer a premature death. If she chose to give him her blessing, he would leave, but reside somewhere not too distant so that they may keep in contact with each other. After several attempts Gauranga finally persuaded his mother to allow him to leave—and there are many stories of this period of his life in the Chaitanya tradition. So one night, without a word to anyone, Gauranga left hearth and home—much like the story of how Lord Buddha left his kingdom.

Gauranga then meets Kesava Bharati, another monk of the Dashanami sect in a town called Katoa, not far from Nabadwip, and requests initiation into 'sannyasa'. Kesava Bharati refuses since Gauranga is still young and handsome, has known married life, and until recently had lived as a family man with his wife and mother. As such there was a chance he might deviate

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from monastic life. So Kesava Bharati decided to test if Gauranga was really prepared and qualified to become a monk. One of the most important of such tests is the control of one's palate, as one who has control of the palate, has control of the other senses. Sugar was brought and placed on Gauranga's tongue, but saliva did not spontaneously secrete to dissolve the sugar on his tongue, and the sugar was blown off his tongue with a gust of wind. At this Kesava was convinced Gauranga was fit to be a monk and initiated him into the Bharati Order and was given the new name of Sri Krishna Chaitanya Bharati.

It is said that Kesava Bharati then arranged for their regular barber to shave Gauranga's head, but the barber was so surprised to see such a handsome young man become a monk that he refused to shave his head. Only upon the ardent insistence of Gauranga would the barber do as he was asked. It is also said that this barber was so distraught later that he threw the tools of his trade into the Ganga and quit his profession.

Sri Chaitanya Moves to Puri

To fulfil his mother's wish, Sri Krishna Chaitanya then decided to move to Puri in Odisha, the seat of the Celestial Temple of Lord Jagannath, Lord of the Universe, and live. He said that since the yearly Jagannath Festival or Car Festival is held in Puri and is a pilgrimage attended by many Bengalis, it would be easy for them to keep in touch and stay informed of each other's condition if he lived there. With this intention Sri Krishna Chaitanya proceeded to Puri with friends and followers chanting:

Krishna Kesava, Krishna Kesava, Krishna Kesava, Pahi Mam
Rama Ragava, Rama Ragava, Rama Ragava, Raksha Mam

The basic meaning is "O' Lord nourish me, O' Lord protect me." He also sang songs with verses including, "Jagannātha svāmī nayana-patha-gāmī bhavatu me", meaning O' Lord Jagannath, please give your vision to me.'

He would live in Puri from that time on, occasionally visiting other places of pilgrimage, like Benares and especially, Vrindavan, of which he was very fond. While in Puri he spent his time in giving spiritual instructions, singing the names of the Lord and dancing in an ecstatic mood with the devotees and disciples. At other times he would be immersed in ecstatic love of God with Sri Krishna. Towards the end of his life he remained mostly indoors in that ecstatic state. Outwardly he would appear mostly inert, but inwardly he remained in communion with the Lord.

Sri Krishna Chaitanya's passing is a subject of controversy. One story is that at Puri he mistook the ocean for his dear Krishna's Yamuna River, and entered the waters, never to be seen again. Another version says Sri Chaitanya became one with the image of Jagannath, therefore his body could not be found. These are but two versions of Sri Krishna Chaitanya's passing and the disappearance of his remains.

The Teachings of Chaitanya

As we mentioned earlier there were many inequalities in Hindu society. Sri Chaitanya taught that there is really only one caste, and that is the caste of devotee, no other caste like Brahmin, Kshatriyas, or Shudras. One may be born in a high caste such as a Brahmin, but if he is not a devotee of God, then he actually belongs to the lowest caste. Likewise, if one belongs to a lower caste and chants the name of the Lord and has love for God, such a person should be regarded as belonging to the highest caste. There are many castes and sub-castes in Indian

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society, and Sri Chaitanya attempted to eliminate all these class distinctions which caused so much inequality in society. This is the same view that Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi held; that there is only one caste, and that is the caste of the devotee.

Sri Chaitanya also taught that Allah and Hari are the same entity, there are not two Gods, and no need for arguing among followers of different religions, and that forced conversions are unnecessary. Muslims should not convert Hindus and Hindus should not hate Muslims, they should respect each other.

In Chaitanya's era religion had come to be seen and practiced as pure ritualism, and in other cases taught as dry philosophy, but Sri Chaitanya taught love for God; how to have love for God, and how to grow love of God. What He taught is the most important thing about religion or spirituality, and in this sense He was the incarnation of the love of God.

Sri Chaitanya wrote eight verses that include and summarise His teachings:

- 1) The name of the Lord cleanses the heart of the devotee and extinguishes worldliness.
- 2) God has various names and each name has divine potentiality, and while there is no fixed time to call on the Lord, I am so unfortunate to have no taste for the name of the Lord.
- 3) One should be humbler than a blade of grass. One should have more endurance than that of a tree. One should be devoid of any conceit and not seek any honour, name or fame. One should always sing the name Hari.
- 4) One should not want either wealth nor retinue, beautiful maidens, or the gift of any occult powers, but only have one longing, longing for the Lord. So let me have that disinterested devotion to you.
- 5) O' Lord, O' Krishna, I am your servant and immersed in worldliness, so give me refuge at your lotus feet.
- 6) O' Lord, I am wondering when, by singing your name, will my eyes will be full of tears of joy, my words choked in my throat, and the hairs on my body erect in the joy of singing your name.
- 7) O' Lord, if there is any separation between you and I for a short while, even for the twinkling of an eye, I will consider this a separation of ages. My tears will flow like waters in the rainy season, and all the world will appear as a void to me, should such a day come.
- 8) O' Lord, if You embrace me or keep me at a distance; if You love me or do not love me, O' Lord, You are my only refuge.

These eight shastras or teachings can be further summarised in a few instructions that are very important for every devotee. Chaitanya told Raghunath, a devotee going to live in Vrindavan, to follow these spiritual instructions and live a spiritual life there. These instructions were:

- 1) 'grāmya-kathā na sunibe.'
Don't listen to worldly talk.
- 2) 'grāmya-vartā nā kahibe.'
Don't speak worldly talk.
- 3) 'bhala nā khāibe.'
Do not eat delicious food.

4) 'ār bhāla nā paribe.'
Do not dress well.

5) 'amāni mānada.'
Give honour to the lowly.

6) 'Krishna-nāma sāda labe.'
Always chant the name of Krishna.

7) 'vraje Radha-Krishna sevā mānase karibe.'
Offer seva (selfless service) to Radha and Krishna who live in Vrindavan mentally.

What is the justification and efficacy for the advice of such practices? First, don't listen to worldly talk. This means talks about business, about politics, about hobbies, about food, about fashion, these are all secular, so a devotee should not listen to them. Why, because it will disturb his mind and waste his time and energy, so he may not have enough energy and time to do spiritual practice and concentrate on God. That is why Sri Chaitanya advised, "Don't listen to worldly talk." The same reasons apply to His advise, "Don't speak worldly talk."

Next was the advise, "Don't eat delicious food." Why? Because if a devotee's mind is busy with buying, preparing and enjoying good, tasty food, his desire for tasty foods will grow. Consequently, it will be difficult for him to control the palate. If one's palate cannot be controlled, it will be difficult to control his other senses, hence, his spiritual life will be impaired. We will remember that Swami Kesava Bharati tested Gauranga before accepting him in this way by putting sugar on his tongue.

"Don't dress well," was the next advise. This is relevant for a spiritual practitioner because attachment to one's dress may lead to the enhancement of one's Identification with the body. Also, when one wears some special clothing, ornaments or jewellery that is fashionable or expensive, pride grows. When we dress well there is also some subconscious desire that others will see and admire us.

Next is: "Give honour to those of low status." Why? One reason is to humble our ego, I am superior to others, especially lowly persons. But does not the Lord reside in such persons? So how can we be superior to another? By showing honour to the lowly we can practice humility and remove thoughts of superiority.

Next Sri Chaitanya advises: "Always chant the name of Lord Krishna," because the Lord is pure, His name is also pure. Chanting His name at all times has three very important effects upon us as devotees: First of all, it cleanses our heart. Secondly, our love for God grows. Finally, it protects our mind from thinking secular thoughts. The mind cannot keep quiet, it must have some thought to think. If we do not provide it with good and spiritual thoughts, it often chooses to think negative and secular thoughts causing trouble for us.

Finally, "Serve Radha and Krishna who live in your heart mentally." Meaning: Imagine that in our heart Radha and Krishna, or the embodiment of one's Chosen Ideal always resides, and we should perform various types of worship and personal service to them mentally, and his will help us to become closer to the Lord.

This is the essence of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's teachings, which serves as an ideal for our spiritual practice and goal. •



Swami Medhasananda Reciting Sri Chaitanya's Childhood Pranks



Divyanathananda Offering Songs to Sri Chaitanya Deva



Reading from The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna



Preparing and Planting



● A Story to Remember ●

The Curious Villager

In a small village lived a man who was always happy, kind, and well disposed to everyone he met. Everyone who met him, left feeling better, happier and elated. One of the village dwellers was curious to know what his secret was, and how he could always be so kind and helpful.

Once, upon meeting him in the street he asked: "Most people are selfish and unsatisfied with their lot in life. They do not smile as often as you do—neither are they as helpful or kind as you are. Can you explain this to me?"

The man paused, smiled and replied, "When we make peace with ourself, we can be at peace with the rest of the world. When we can recognise the spirit that resides within ourselves, we can recognise that spirit in everyone, and it becomes natural for us to be kind and well disposed to all. If our thoughts are under our control, we become strong and firm."

"The mind is programmed by the habits and thoughts that control it. We need to free ourselves from this programming. Good habits have to be developed and the mind controlled to our will. Then, the inner good and the happiness that reside within us will be revealed."

The villager lamented, "But it seems much work is needed to develop such good habits. Our old habits persist and the work needed to change is difficult and seems endless . How can we focus and control our thoughts? It is no easy task."

The man smiled again, "But only you can make the effort. With practice the mind will be peaceful only briefly at first, but with more unrelenting effort, those brief moments will grow longer. This peace will bring strength, power, kindness and love. In time, we come to realise that we are one with the Universal Power, and this will lead us to act from a different dimension, a different point of view, and a different consciousness—not from our small, selfish, limited ego."

"I will try to remember your words," said the villager. "I have seen that people sense your inner strength, and therefore, do not impose upon you."

"Goodness is not a sign of weakness, friend. Good character can manifest with power and strength too. When we are calm inside, we are also happy. When our mind is quiet, there is no anger or resentment, and negative thoughts do not arise. This leads to inner happiness, contentment and joy."

"Let me begin my journey by thanking you very much for your time, your advice and your explanations", said the villager, who then went away inspired to face the challenges that awaited him,.

From Internet Sources

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