



JUNE 2021 -VOLUME 19 NUMBER 06

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

JULY 2021
Calendar



Happy
Guru
Purnima!

Birthdays

Guru Purnima
Saturday, 24 July

Zushi Events

COVID restrictions have been partially lifted by the Japanese government as of 21 June 2021. However, most precautions remain in place. Our monthly programmes and classes will continue with advised precautions observed.

Details on page 02!



✧ Thus Spake ✧

"Pure knowledge and pure love are one and the same thing. Both lead aspirants to the same goal. The path of love is much the easier."

- Sri Ramakrishna

"Seek not for life on earth or in heaven. Thirst for life is delusion. Knowing life to be transitory, wake up from this dream of ignorance and strive to attain knowledge and freedom before death claims you."

- Sri Krishna

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Vedanta Society of Japan Events for JULY 2021

The Japanese government has eased some restrictions on travel and dining out for residents of the Tokyo and Osaka areas. The government continues to urge residents to take all possible precautions against the spread of COVID-19, including 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 remains restricted, so contact us if you wish to attend any of the programmes.

Swami Medhasananda, President
Vedanta Society of Japan

JULY 2021 Calendar of Programmes

3rd (Sat) July

Bhagavad Gita Study Class at the Indian Embassy

* Video uploaded later

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

6th (Wed) July - Zoom

Weekly Upanishad Study Class

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

13th (Wed) July - Zoom

Weekly Upanishad Study Class

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

18th (Sun) July- Live-streaming (Bi-lingua)

Monthly Zushi Retreat

AM Session - 10:30 - Live-streaming

PM Session Talk - 14:00 - Live-streaming (Bi-lingual)

16th (Wed) July - Zoom

Weekly Upanishad Study Class

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

25th (Sun) July - Live-streaming & Zoom

Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna Study Class

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

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

< **Live Streaming** >

[Click here](#) to go to YouTube.

< **Online Study Class on Zoom** >

[Click here](#) to go to the Japanese page 'Zoom'.

June Zushi Monthly Retreat
Celebrating Gautama Buddha's Birth Anniversary

According to the Vishuddha Siddhanta Almanac Sri Buddhadev's birth anniversary fell on the 26th of May in 2021. As the Society's Monthly Zushi Retreat is held on the 3rd Sunday of each month, the Vedanta Society of Japan celebrated Lord Buddha's birth during the Monthly Retreat of the 20th of June. The video of the afternoon programme is available on the Society's YouTube channel at <<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCACkMHPYx2CVLg7ZyrEDoSw>> programmes are listed by yr/mo/day with bi-lingual titles, for example:

“20210620 ブッダ生誕祝賀会 Sri Buddha Birthday Celebration”

The session started with Swami Medhasananda (Maharaj) leading the congregation in chanting Vedantic peace prayers followed by a few minutes of silent prayer. A recorded Japanese Buddhist 'Heart Sutra' (Hannyashingyou) mantra by Reverend Ryodo Yamashita, from the Society's 'Mantram' (Hindu and Buddhist Mantra Chanting) CD, was then presented and recited in unison by the congregation. Next Maharaj asked Miss Shanti to lead the congregation in the Society's annual Buddhist chant Buddham Saranam Gacchami:

Buddham sharanam gacchami	(I take refuge in the Enlightened One)
Dharmam sharanam gacchami	(I take refuge in Buddha's teachings)
Sangham sharanam gacchami	(I take refuge in holy company)

Swami Medhasananda then read from *The Teachings of Buddha* - 'The Way of Practical Attainment' followed by a congregant reading the same passages in the Japanese version:

'Rust grows from iron and destroys it; so evil grows from the mind of man and destroys him. A scripture that is not read with sincerity soon becomes covered with dust; a house that is not fixed when it needs repairing becomes filthy; so an idle man soon becomes defiled. Impure acts defile a person; stinginess defiles an offering; so evil acts defile not only this life, but also the following lives. But the defilement to be most dreaded is the defilement of ignorance. A man can not hope to purify either one's body or mind until ignorance is removed. It is easy to slip into shamelessness, to be pert and bold like a crow, to hurt others without any feeling of regret for such action. It is hard, indeed, to feel humble, to know respect and honor, to get rid of all attachments, to keep pure in thought and deed, and to become wise. It is easy to point out the mistakes of others, while it is hard to admit one's own mistakes. A man broadcasts the sins of others without thinking, but one hides one's own sins as a gambler hides his extra dice. The sky holds no trace of bird or smoke or storm; an evil teaching carries no Enlightenment; nothing in this world is stable; but an Enlightened mind is undisturbed.'

Swami Medhasananda then greeted one and all:

“Konnichiwa (good afternoon)! Namaste! Members of the Ramakrishna Order, the monks and devotees, believe in the 'Harmony of Religions'. Of course we especially respect, worship and follow the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda and the Vedanta, but at the same time we also study and show respect to Jesus Christ and Lord Buddha, the founders of Christianity and Buddhism respectively.

“We are not afraid that if we study other religions and other scriptures, then our faith in our own religion will be reduced. Rather, we think we'll be enriched by the study and in following of some of the important teachings of other religions and other prophets. This is what Sri Ramakrishna, our chosen deity, and his chief disciple, Swami Vivekananda, taught us. Almost from the very beginning of our Order we have a long tradition of celebrating Christmas Eve and

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Buddha (from page 3)

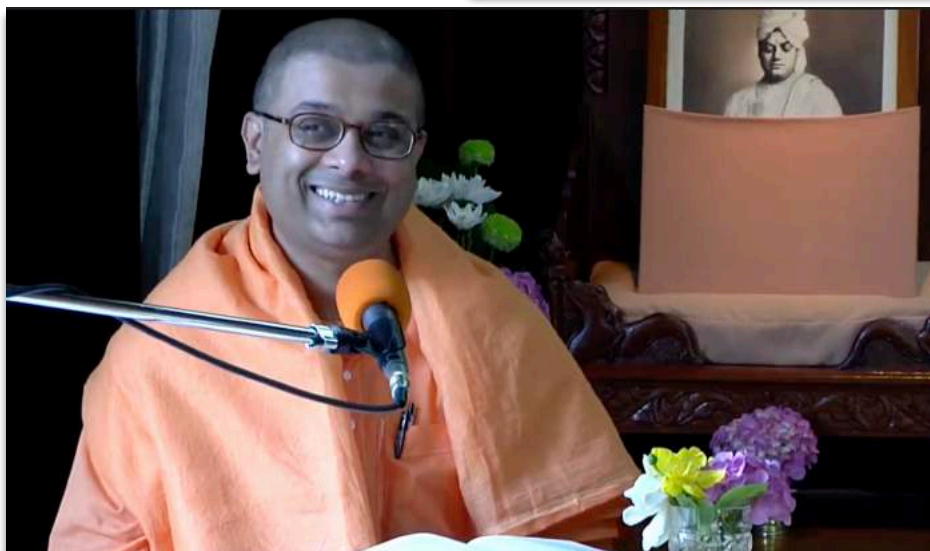
the birth of Jesus and Lord Buddha's birthday. In our headquarters at Belur Math in India, and other branches of our Order, we celebrate as a tradition both Christmas Eve and Lord Buddha's birth.

“As a branch of the Ramakrishna Order in Japan it is especially significant that we celebrate Lord Buddha's birth here, a primarily Buddhist country. On January 1st each year we also visit the large Buddha statue, Daibutsu, in neighbouring Kamakura to pay our respects. Every Sunday morning we also have a special chanting and readings from *The Teachings of Buddha*. Every year we also celebrate Buddha's birthday, and on this occasion we usually invite a Buddhist priest or nun to give a talk, but for the since last year it has been a little difficult (due to COVID restrictions), so we celebrate in our modest way. Also we generally hold this programme in our Annexe building (to accommodate larger congregations), but we are again celebrating here in our Ashram Shrine.

“Also, again this year we could not invite a Buddhist monk or nun to come and give a talk. So today, our Swami Divyanathananda, who needs no introduction to you, will give a talk on Lord Buddha and His Teachings in English, to be interpreted by Mr. Leonardo Alvarez, who is also well known to you.”

With this introduction Swami Divyanathananda launched into his presentation of 'The Life and Teachings of Lord Buddha'. This talk will be presented in its entirety in the July issue of *The Vedanta Kyokai* newsletter. •

Swami Medhasananda



Swami Divyanathananda

6 June 2021
Public Celebration Yokohama
Swami Vivekananda: 128th Birth Anniversary
Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: 125th Birth Anniversary

On 6th June of 2021 the Vedanta Society of Japan held their annual Swami Vivekananda Public Celebration, jointly organised with the Embassy of India, Tokyo, in Yokohama with registered admittance, after a one-year COVID restrictions postponement. This year the event was originally planned for the large Minami Otsuka Theatre venue, but sudden renewed COVID restrictions necessitated a change of venue to the Indian Embassy in Tokyo, however, with restrictions tightened further, Swami Medhasananda and the Celebration Committee scrambled to secure a suitable venue in Yokohama.

At 2PM the English and Japanese language MCs, Kathy Matsui and Satsuki Yokota respectively, introduced themselves and launched the programme calling on Swamis Medhasananda and Divyanathananda, Leonardo Alvarez and Shanti Izumida to chant the invocation of Vedic Peace Prayers.

Swami Medhasananda then led the entire congregation in a Upanishadic prayer:

Sarve bhavantu sukhinah
Sarve santu nirāmayāḥ
Sarve bhadraṇi paśyantū
mā kaścidduḥ khabhāgbhaveta

Let everyone be happy
Let everyone be healthy
Let everyone see the good
Let none suffer

Sarveshaam Svastir Bhavatu
Sarveshaam Shaantir Bhavatu
Sarveshaam Purnnam Bhavatu
Sarveshaam Mangalam Bhavatu

Let everyone be happy
Let everyone be peaceful
Let everyone be perfect
Let auspicious befall everyone

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti

The swami then bid all to join in a few moments of silent prayer, “for the peace of all humanity, and especially for the peace of the departed souls and victims of the current pandemic, and for the consolation of their near and dear ones. Let us also pray to the Lord that by His grace may the present crisis soon end and normalcy return to the whole world.”

A flower bouquet was then offered to the large photograph of Swami Vivekanandaji by the Indian Ambassador to Japan, H. E. Mr. Sanjay Kumar Verma. Next the Ambassador was called upon to release a special edition of the Society’s ‘Universal Gospel’ magazine and a new book by Swami Medhasananda, *The Story of the India-Japan Relationship / Swami Vivekananda and Okakura Tenshin the Modern Era Pioneers*.

Swami Medhasananda then offered his Welcome Speech (presented in this June issue of *The Vedanta Kyokai*).

Ambassador Verma was then called upon to offer a talk speaking briefly on the very special relationship both Swamiji and Netaji had with Japan (presented in this June issue of *The Vedanta Kyokai*).

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Public Celebration (from page 5)

Professor Dr. Tomohiko Taniguchi then spoke on Japan's official recognition of Swami Vivekananda, and some data on the Japanese Buddhist delegation to the First Parliament of Religions, where Vivekananda made such an eventful appearance. Part One of this talk is presented in this June issue of *The Vedanta Kyokai*.

Mr. Takeyuki Tanaka, a writer and researcher at the Centre of South Asian Studies, Gifu Women's University, then presented an exhaustive allocution on the ancient history of the India/Japan Relationship to the Meiji Restoration and Netaji's efforts to secure Japanese support for an Indian Independence revolt during the Second World War. This talk will be presented three parts, the first of which is presented in this June issue of *The Vedanta Kyokai*.

Swami Medhasananda then offered some relevant remarks and information found in his research for his newly released book on the India-Japan Relationship. This talk is also presented in this June issue of *The Vedanta Kyokai*.

Since our usual Cultural Programme segment was not practical at this venue with the pandemic ongoing, two prerecorded videos of Indian devotees in Japan singing and a brief live performance of two songs with masked Japanese devotees followed.

Lastly a vote of thanks was offered by Mr. Atsushi Suzuki, Secretary, The Vedanta Society of Japan and Mr. Jagmohan Chandrani, Secretary, Vivekananda Birth Anniversary Celebration Committee and member of the Society's Managing Committee. Mr. Chandrani also provided the snacks that were offered on a take away only basis.

A reception desk and minimal display of the Society's books for sale had been arranged in the narrow foyer fronting the entry of large event room.

The following day Swami Medhasananda announced in an email to Celebration Committee members: *"The celebration went off well and was enjoyable, all of the (scheduled) speakers including the Ambassador of India, H. E. Mr. Sanjay Kumar Verma, attended the programme and spoke on the occasion."*

When contacted later, Swami Divyanathananda added, *"I found the Swamiji seminar a fantastic and very concentrated programme. The talk by Mr. Taniguchi was extremely interesting. The other talk by Mr. Tanaka was also very informative. The songs (Culture Programme) towards the end, specially those with Leonardo, Shanti and Yumi, were marvellous. In all, I was overwhelmed to witness the function."* •



Volunteers, Guest Speakers, Performers, Swamis Medhasananda and Divyanathananda



H. E. Ambassador Verma

- Offers Flower Bouquet to Swami Vivekananda
- Releases Universal Gospel Special Edition
- Releases New Book - by Swami Medhasananda
*The Story of the Japan-India Relationship
Swami Vivekananda & Okakura Tenshin
the Modern Era Pioneers*



Stage Crew, MCs, and Swami Medhasananda



L-R / Speaker Dr. Taniguchi, Swami Medhasanandaji, Speaker Mr. Tanaka



Prerecorded Cultural Programme Segments





Live Cultural Programme Segment



Messrs Chandrani and Suzuki

Public Celebration in Yokohama 6th June 2021
Swami Vivekananda: 158th Birth Anniversary
Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: 125th Birth Anniversary

Welcome Speech

Swami Medhasananda

Dear and esteemed friends, konnichiwa!

I, on behalf of the organisers of today's event, which is jointly organised by the Embassy of India, Japan and Vedanta Society of Japan, cordially welcome you all to this celebration of the 158th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda and the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. May I offer my special welcome to His Excellency, Mr. Sanjay Kumar Verma, Ambassador of India, the chief guest of today's programme, Professor Tomohiko Taniguchi of the Keio University, a distinguished scholar and today's keynote speaker, and Mr. Tanaka Takeyuki, an author and researcher. His Excellency, Mr. Verma has showed a keen interest in today's programme since its planning stage. I also see Professor Siddharth Singh, Director, Vivekananda Cultural Centre, Embassy of India, among the audience, who on behalf of the Indian Embassy, rendered all possible help to hold this programme and was quite enthusiastic about it. My hearty welcome to Director Siddharth Singh as well.

We have been holding the Vivekananda Celebration in Tokyo since 1994 except for last year, which we had to cancel because of special circumstances. We are glad that this year we have been able to make it, at least in a modest way by the Lord's grace and with the cooperation of our celebration committee members, sympathisers and dedicated volunteers, in spite of many hurdles.

Swami Vivekananda, born in India, was a prophet of the modern age, inspiring millions of souls all over the world. Freedom fighters of India against the British rule, including Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, an idealist and patriot, were highly inspired by Swami Vivekananda. Netaji even considered himself as one of the disciples of Swamiji. Netaji also had a close relationship with the Ramakrishna Mission, a spiritual and philanthropic organisation of India, founded by Swami Vivekananda, of which our Vedanta Society is a branch in Japan.

Netaji fought gallantly against the British Government of India with the active support of the Japanese Government. So the celebration of Swamiji's birth anniversary along with that of Netaji, and also celebrating it in Japan, a country with which both of them had connections in different degrees, is highly significant. We are eagerly looking forward to hearing about Vivekananda from Professor Taniguchi and about Subhas Chandra from Mr. Tanaka. I am sure the speeches on their themes will enlighten us.

We all know that we are now passing through a critical stage of history around the world including Japan. In addition to various physical supports, we do need mental and spiritual support to face the present situation effectively with courage, wisdom and hope. We do believe that discussion on the ideal lives, inspiring messages and sacrificing spirit of Swamiji and Netaji will provide us that support. Herein lies the justification of holding today's celebration.

I again heartily welcome you all to today's celebration.

Namaskar! Arigato gozaimashita!

Public Celebration in Yokohama 6th June 2021
Swami Vivekananda: 158th Birth Anniversary
Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: 125th Birth Anniversary

Welcome Address by Ambassador of India to Japan H. E. Mr. Sanjay Kumar Verma

Tomohiko Taniguchi-san, Tanaka Takeyuki-san, Swami Medhasananda, Ladies & Gentlemen, konnichiwa, namaste. It is indeed a matter of great pleasure for me to attend the celebration of the 128th Birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda along with the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Please accept my greetings to all of you on this auspicious occasion.

Swami Vivekananda's entire life was a source of inspiration for people from all walks of life in India. His reading of timeless Indian culture and its interpretation to promote peace and harmony has been a hallmark achievement. His deep understanding of human values made him popular outside India as well. He targeted the ignorance prevailing in various societies and attempted to shake them off.



A very practical man, Swami Vivekananda believed that the service to mankind should be selfless as service to mankind was service to God. For him, religion was not just about rituals and blind faith. His important message is: "Religion without philosophy leads to superstition and philosophy without religion turns into atheism". He worked tirelessly towards betterment of the society, in servitude of the poor and the needy, dedicating his entire life to his country. Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore makes a remark about Swami Ji, "If you want to know India, study Vivekananda. In him everything is positive and nothing negative.

Swami Vivekananda's reading into Indian culture and its linkage with a humane way of living attracted the attention of Mahatma Gandhi as well, who after visiting Belur Math wrote in the visitor's book, "*I have thoroughly read the works of Swami Vivekananda. My patriotism increased by 1000 times after reading him.*"

He was of the view "*if India is to be free, it cannot be a land especially of Hinduism or Islam - It must be one united land of different religions inspired by the ideal of nationalism. And for that Indians must accept wholeheartedly the gospel of harmony of religions.*" The people of India have gained a lot of self-respect & self-assertion from his teachings. "*Freedom is the song of the soul*" - this was the message that burst forth from the inner recesses of Swamiji's heart and captivated the entire nation. This truth was embodied in his work, life, conversation and speeches.

His vision to changing the world enshrined in the philosophy of changing minds. He said, "*Unless human nature is changed, sorrows will come and all sorrows of the world can't be removed only with physical strength. The only solution to this problem is to purify and sanctify human beings. All the sorrows and evils we see evolve from ignorance. Make people spiritually educated. Only then sorrows will disappear from the world. We can fill this country with hospitals,*

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Ambassador's Address (from page 11)

but if nature is not changed sorrows must remain.” In the present critical times of pandemic, the views of Swami Vivekananda show the path to overcome all kinds of challenges. He proclaims — *“Pull out yourself from danger, you have to rescue yourself. Don't be afraid and frustrated. Go on working. March ahead. Expose your force. Light will come.”*

Swami Vivekananda fostered new enthusiasm for progress among the people of India, especially the youth of India, so much so that the entire nation of India celebrates his birth anniversary as 'National Youth Day.' Inspiring youths he said, *“My heroic youths, believe that you are born to perform great deeds. Wake up, no more sleep. The strength of removing all sorrows and deficits are within you. Believe these and that strength will wake up. Work for your countrymen. They will also help you and will stand behind you. Be courageous. Man dies only once.”* Swami Vivekananda had sent a message from Osaka (Japan) to the youth of India — let's be human. He also dwelt on the capabilities of the young; he wanted the young to train in order to serve humanity.

Swami Vivekananda was not only a spiritual thinker or social reformer, but also an educator. Vivekananda's educational thought can be effectively embedded into a person's character. If education is viewed as the most powerful instrument of social change, his contribution to educational thought is of paramount importance. He defines education as *‘the manifestation of perfection that is already in man’*.

At the end of May 1893, Swami Vivekananda set out from Bombay, and sailed via Hong Kong and Japan to Vancouver. From there he travelled by train to Chicago, in order to participate in the Parliament of Religions to be held there on 11 September 1893. Swami Vivekananda later referred to the good qualities of the Japanese to his Indian audiences on a number of occasions. He observed that Indians, especially the nation's youth, would benefit by studying secular matters in Japan, just as the Japanese would benefit from the study of Indian spirituality.

Fortunately, today we are also celebrating the 125th birth anniversary of another great son of Indian soil, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, and both of these great personalities had a very special relationship with Japan.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose epitomises the noblest attributes of powerful patriotism, selfless service, dedication to a larger cause and extraordinary valour in the face of untold adversity. A charismatic leader and a visionary nationalist, Netaji will continue to inspire generations of Indians and instil in them a profound love for the motherland.

The thought and actions of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, too, were highly influenced by Swami Vivekananda's ideals. He describes his memories in the following words: *“A relative of mine, who was a newcomer to the town, was living next door and I had to visit him. Glancing over his books, I came across the works of Swami Vivekananda. I had hardly turned over a few pages when I realised that here was something which I had been longing for. I borrowed the books from him, brought them home, and devoured them. I was thrilled to the marrow of my bones. My headmaster had roused my aesthetic and moral sense – had given a new impetus to my life – but he had not given me an ideal to which I could give my whole being. That Vivekananda gave me. For days, weeks, months I pored over his works...”* This is how Subhas Chandra Bose recollected his first brush with Vivekananda in his school days.

Subsequently, as Netaji moved from firming up his personal philosophy to acquiring a point of view on political and national issues, Vivekananda continued to be a guiding light. Many

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Ambassador's Address (from page 12)

years after the 1914 letter, speaking to students in Chinsurah in July 1929, he said: *"It was Swami Vivekananda who had, on the one hand, boldly asked his fellow men to shed all sorts of fetters and be 'men' in the truest sense of the term; and, on the other hand, laid the foundation of true nationalism in India by preaching the essential unity of all religions and sects."* The undercurrent of 'true nationalism', being the same as the unity of all religions, stayed with Subhas throughout his lifetime. Though Subhas later engaged with the philosophical thought of many, something of Vivekananda's worldview would always cling to him.

Netaji described Vivekananda as the 'maker of modern India'. Swamiji had a most practical approach in showing the path towards solving humanitarian crises in modern society, therefore, Netaji was influenced by Swamiji's philosophical ideas about reconstructing the nation. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose too, like Swami Vivekananda, believed that every human being is a manifestation of that Supreme Consciousness regardless of its caste, colour, creed or nationality.

Once again, please accept my sincere greetings on this auspicious occasion.

Domo Arigato Gozaimashita.



Swami Vivekananda Public Birthday Celebration
Yokohama 6th June 2021

Talk by

Professor Taniguchi, Tomohiko

Professor, Keio University Graduate School of System Design and Management
Special Adviser to Former Prime Minister ABE, Shinzō's Cabinet

PART I of II

Hello, and good afternoon to you all. My name is TANIGUCHI, Tomohiko and I am most grateful for this opportunity given to me this afternoon to be speaking with you.

Today, I am going to speak about Swami Vivekananda, before the audience presumably most knowledgeable about him, as many of you are associated with the Japan Vedanta Society, the Japan branch of India's Ramakrishna Mission, which Swami Vivekananda founded. As such, I am scratching my head as to how this could have happened, or rather, how I chose to do such a fearless act. From now on, may I sometimes use the name Swamiji, when referring to Swami Vivekananda?

Today, I am going to talk about Swamiji and his international influence. But if I may begin by telling you of the conclusion, it does not really make sense to discuss this subject. That is because Swamiji did not acquire his cosmopolitan mind by meeting the world, especially the West. Quite the opposite was the case. It is the West, that put Christianity over and above all other faiths that they thought were inferior, that bumped into Swamiji. By meeting Swamiji, the West, for the first time, became aware of a world other than and outside its own viewpoint, hence acquiring internationality by meeting Swamiji.

In Chicago in 1893, the white men's Christendom, utterly unprepared prior, met Swamiji as if by accident. It was a watershed. History would thereupon be divided into two: pre- and

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post Swamiji's remarks. The Christian world, having encountered Swamiji, could never again return to the old days when it did not know of Swamiji.

Needless to say, this would lead Swamiji in the ensuing years to spread the teachings of Vedanta in the USA and in the UK. India would no longer be just a territory ruled by the East India Company or under Queen Victoria. It would come to be recognised as a fountain of wisdom and a place for deep and profound thinking.

Swami Vivekananda, in my view, was such a presence as marked an epoch. Should we still question whether the man who changed the world was internationally minded or not? The answer is so self-evident, it is even a truism. And Swamiji made it possible to make a literal breakthrough in just five words. In a once-in-a-century opportunity that comes only to geniuses chosen by the ages, Swamiji changed the world in just five words.

I have said what I wanted to say in conclusion. I will repeat it again, nonetheless, in a few moments. But before that, why was it that Swami Medhasananda wanted me, a complete layman, to deliver a keynote speech today? I would like to touch on that.

The story goes back to 2007. At that time, Prime Minister ABE, Shinzō, who was in the midst of a short tenure that would end in one year, visited India. The Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh, and other Indian leaders, perhaps because of their affinity with Japan and Prime Minister Abe, had prepared a special stage for him. That special place and a special occasion, emerged on the 22nd of August 2007. Prime Minister Abe stood in the Central Hall of the Indian Parliament, and delivered an important speech in the presence of members of both Houses and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.



The hall has a large round spherical ceiling with entasis-like pillars supporting it. The walls are adorned with magnificent portraits of Gandhi, Tagore and other giants of Indian modern history. The title of the speech given by Prime Minister Abe in this solemn hall of democracy spoke volumes. It was titled, "Confluence of the Two Seas."

The Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean are now linked as one. It was an exuberant declaration that India, the world's largest democracy, and Japan, the other leading democracy in Asia, were now deeply connected by common values. The title by the way was taken from what Dara Shikoh, a Mughal prince, used in his own book.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it was this speech Prime Minister Abe delivered that would eventually be hailed by the people of India, and by political leaders in Australia and the United States, as the catalyst for a new geopolitical concept called the Indo-Pacific. The speech and the
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Professor Taniguchi (from page 14)

concept it articulated would evolve to creating a strong framework for cooperation between the four countries.

From the 1980s until recently, the term "Asia Pacific" was commonly used. However, this term does not adequately include India. Seeing hope in India's rising power, believing that a strong Japan is in India's best interest, and that a strong India is in Japan's best interest, Prime Minister Abe decided to fully invite India and raise the flag of freedom high in the vast area connected by the two seas. So, instead of saying "Asia Pacific", he chose to call it "Indo-Pacific".

India in its territory has a group of islands off the coast of Myanmar, just outside the Straits of Malacca. They are called the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. So, India is also an integral part of South East Asia. And the Indian Ocean will become an oceanic highway for more and more industries and economies as the African economy grows. Therefore, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean will be even more connected, and the vast stretch of which will be supported from both East and West by India and Japan, two democratic countries.

The first and decisive step towards this was that speech in the Central Hall.

To begin his speech, which would be so important, Abe quoted a phrase that strongly suggests the intersection of the sea, and I quote, "*the different streams, having their sources in different places, all mingle their water in the sea.*" unquote. He then went on to say, and I quote again, "*It gives me tremendous pleasure to be able to begin my address today with the words of Swami Vivekananda, the great spiritual leader that India gave the world.*"

Now you see the picture, if I may say so. The words of Swamiji, "*the different streams, having their sources in different places, all mingle their water in the sea,*" were drawn from an old Sanskrit prayer he referred to when he represented Hinduism at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, USA, 1893. And the fact that the 53-year-old politician had travelled all the way from Japan to begin his speech with these words left the Indian leaders in the Central Hall astonished, then shaken, and the speech was greeted by a burst of thunderous applause.

Fourteen years on, many Indian leaders still refer to the speech as an important milestone in the relationship between Japan and India. At some point, it became known, both in Delhi and in Tokyo, that this speech was written by a man, a Taniguchi, Tomohiko, who at that time was working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, writing diplomatic speeches for the Foreign Minister and the Prime Minister. Gradually, I would see no point in keeping my identity a secret, as it would become far from that.

And let me tell you something else. As a result of this chance encounter with Prime Minister Abe, I had the honour of writing most of the important diplomatic speeches that Prime Minister Abe would deliver during the seven years and eight months of his second term. Prime Minister Abe has mentioned this himself in many places. I have also revealed it in a book I wrote and published about Mr. Abe. The book "*ABE, Shinzō: The Man Nobody Wrote About*" is available from Asuka Shuppan. Please buy a copy of it.

So much for my self-promotion, this was my first encounter with Swami Vivekananda, one of the greatest religious leaders India has ever produced. Eventually, this small opportunity would lead me to gain acquaintance with Swami Medhasananda. And as a consequence, I am here speaking on no one else but Swamiji, with those of you who know much more about him than I do.

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Let's return to the setting of the Parliament of the World's Religions, Chicago, 1893.

It was on the first day of the conference that Swamiji made his historic speech. Notice the date. It was the second Monday in September, 1893, but the date was the 11th -- 911. Exactly 108 years later, the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington took place. It has since become common knowledge that religious intolerance, and in particular the narrow-mindedness of Muslim extremists to see Christians as the enemy, was behind the attacks.

• Thought of the Month •

“Where there is purpose,
there is happiness as well.”

-Swami Abhedanandaji

That was why I was surprised. I was amazed that the words of an Indian religious leader, spoken 108 years before 911, would have a much more poignant ring to them now when we live. That's why I wanted to start Abe's speech with Swamiji's words.

It was during the afternoon session on the first day of the conference that Swami Vivekananda, dressed in an eye-catching orange robe and with his head covered by a turban, came to the podium and began to speak.

"Sisters and brothers of America." Again, "Sisters and brothers of America."

Why? Why not "Ladies and Gentlemen?"

He also said "of America," apparently wishing to address the whole of America. At this time, Swamiji was only 30 years old. Even though he had grown into an experienced religious leader, having traveled all over India to beg for alms, he was determined from the start to make his message heard throughout America.

Why was it not "Ladies and Gentlemen," then?

I would say that he knew that as soon as he pronounced the word "Sisters," the women in the audience would react as if they had been struck by lightning. If it was "Ladies," no one would be surprised. It had to be "Sisters."

After "Sisters," the next word is, of course, "Brothers."

At this point, the audience must have understood in an instant what this young man from India, whom they had never seen before, had intended. You and I are the same people. That's what he was trying to say. There is no superiority or inferiority between races, or between religions. The crux of his ensuing speech being such, the five words of sisters and brothers of America summed it up. He made the audience acutely aware of that right at the outset.

Ladies and gentlemen, a speech is an art form that can only be passed down from generation to generation if it causes a stir and elicits applause. If you asked Yazawa Eikichi, for example, to give a speech about rock music, I'm sure he would give a great speech. Because there is no difference between a speech and rock music in terms of trying to move the audience from the stage.

So, if speech is an art form, what did Swami Vivekananda sound like when he said the five words "Sisters and brothers of America"?

End of PART I, the completion of this talk will be presented in the July issue of The Vedanta Kyokai.

Swami Vivekananda Public Birthday Celebration Yokohama 6th June 2021

**Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and the Japanese Patriots
Who Upheld the Indian Independence Movement**

by

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PART I of III

India-Japan Relations Have Existed Since Ancient Times

I am thankful to you all for having invited me today for Swami Vivekananda's birth memorial. Today is also the 125th anniversary of the birth of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. On this great and memorable day, to give a lecture before the Indian people on "Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, who had links to my own clan, as well as on the Japanese patriots who upheld India's independence movement, is a matter for which I am honoured and sincerely grateful.

My Own Clan

Please pardon me for speaking of myself. My great-grandfather hailed from Fukuoka, Kyushu, and his name was Hiraoka Kyotaro. In his hometown of Fukuoka he formed a political organisation called Genyosha, and after the Meiji Restoration, on behalf of the Tokugawa Shogunate and in opposition to the dictatorship of the Meiji oligarchy government that ruled Japan, he developed a Freedom and People's Rights Movement, and requested the Meiji government to open a parliament and establish a constitution.

On February 21, 1899 (Meiji 32), when the Constitution of the Empire of Japan was publicised, my great-grandfather, besides making great efforts towards the movement to revise the unequal treaty that Japan had signed with the Western powers at the end of the Edo period, in the fourth general election for the House of Representatives in 1894 (Meiji 27), he ran as a candidate from the third ward of Fukuoka prefecture, and was elected a member of the House of Representatives. Until his death in 1905 (Meiji 39), he won six consecutive elections until the 9th general election.

On the other hand he actively backed the independence movements of Asian nations, which at that time were colonies of the Western powers. He supported in particular the Chinese revolution and the granting of asylum to the revolutionary Sun Yat Sen, by paying for all his living and other expenses while he was in exile in Japan, and provided most of the funds for revolutionary activities.

Also, in 1888 (Meiji 31), in order to overthrow the dictatorship of the Meiji oligarchy he united Itagaki Taisuke and Okuma Shigenobu, who were his comrades in the Freedom and People's Rights Movement, and formed the Kumaban Cabinet, which was the first political party cabinet in Japan.

At that time, despite the fact that my great-grandfather was the central figure in the establishment of the Kumaban Cabinet, upon observing Diet members playing a game of musical chairs, wherein each member appeared only to seek a cabinet minister position, which he found this

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game unsightly, and so he personally declined all official positions. In order to raise funds for his political activities, my great-grandfather started the management of a coal mining industry in the Chikuho region of Fukuoka. He achieved great success, and in 1901 (Meiji 33) he became the highest taxpayer in Fukuoka Prefecture.

Today, as the Coal-mining King of Chikuho, the name of Hiraoka Kotaro has been engraved in history, along with the names of Aso, Kaijima, Ito, and Yasukawa. The companies my great-grandfather began, and to which he was linked, still exist as large enterprises. We have examples like Wakachiku Construction, Yasukawa Electric Corporation, the Nishi Nippon Shimbun Company, the Kyushu Railway Company, the Kyushu Electric Power Company, Saibu Gas, and others.

Besides scattering his fortune around so as to create jobs for local farmers, in order to bring about the modernisation of Japan by promoting local industries, my great-grandfather also invited the government-run Yahata Steel Works (currently Nippon Steel) to Kitakyushu, and in addition to providing funds for the establishment of a medical school at Kyushu University, he was also enthusiastic about the education business.

Toyama Mitsuru, a relative of my great-grandfather Hiraoka Kotaro who founded the Genyosha along with him. Ryohei Uchida, who later founded the Black Dragon Society in order to conduct special studies on Russian issues, was the nephew of my great-grandfather. I shall speak of this later, but patriots such as Toyama Mitsuru and Uchida Ryohei came to support the freedom struggle of India, by playing a central role in the granting of asylum to revolutionaries like Rash Behari Bose.

Ancient History of India/Japan Relationship

However, prior to embarking upon the main topic, let me briefly present the history of relations between India and Japan.

The history of exchanges between India and Japan dates back to very ancient times, and commenced in the 6th century, when Buddhism was introduced to Japan. Bodhisena, an Indian monk who came to Japan in 736 (Tenpyō 8) in order to propagate Buddhism, served as the officiating monk for the Great Buddha's eye-opening memorial service at the Todaiji Temple. Bodhisena lived in Japan until his death in 760 (Tenpyō-hōji 4).

When the Indian Buddhist culture entered Japan, it exerted a great influence on Japanese culture. Monks and scholars hailing from the nations of India and Japan that were now linked together by Buddhism, often embarked upon voyages to each other's nations, and consequently, Indian Buddhist monks have been visiting Japan since the 8th century.

In records of an old Buddhist academy located at Nalanda in India, which has now been reduced to ruins, mention is made of scholars and disciples from Japan. One of the most well-known travellers from Japan to the subcontinent of India was Tenjiku Tokubei, a merchant and explorer of the early Edo period. He was called Tenjiku, which was the name for India in ancient Japan.

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Cultural exchange between India and Japan has given rise to several analogies among the folk tales of both nations. Modern popular cultural works, such as comics, graphic novels, and animation works sometimes feature gods (Deva) and demons (Ashura), that are common to India and Japan. The Indian Goddess Saraswati is called Benzaiten in Japan, the God Brahma is called Bonten, and the God Yama is Enma. Also, in the societies of India and Japan the impact of Buddhism is visible all over, in contrast to other nations of today's world in which monotheistic religions are found. Similar to Shinto, which is a religion of animism, Hinduism too possesses elements of animism.



Sanskrit, the classical language of Hinduism and Buddhism was passed down by ancient Chinese monks who emigrated to Japan, and it is still being used today. Also, Sanskrit characters that are no longer used in India are still being used in Japanese temples, and some are of the view that the torii found at the entrance to Japanese Shinto shrines, may be linked to the Torana visible at the entrance to Indian temples.

In the 16th century Japan established political links with India, certain areas of which had become Portuguese territory. The Japanese at the time believed that the Portuguese had arrived from India, and that Christianity had become a new Indian faith. Such speculations arose owing to the fact that the Indian city of Goa happened to be the central hub of the Portuguese East India company, and most of the Indian crew on board the Portuguese ships were Christians.

Sailors paid visits to Japan in the 16th and 17th century, and in the 18th and 19th century visits on British ships became frequent. When the persecution of Christians in Japan began in 1596, many Japanese Christians fled to the city of Goa in India, which was a Portuguese colony. At the start of the 17th century Goa had a Japanese community, whose people were either bought or captured by Japanese traders and the Portuguese.

Meiji Era

The relationship between India and Japan has continued since then, but it was not until the Meiji era in Japan that frequent and direct exchanges commenced. In 1903 (Meiji 36), the Japan-India Association was established. In the middle of the 20th century, further cultural exchanges took place through movies made by both Indians and Japanese, which had entered a 'golden age.' The movies of Satyajit Ray, Guru Dutt and Rajnikant had a great impact on the movies of Japan, while those of Kurosawa Akira, Ozu Yasujiro, and Shimizu Takashi also had a great impact on the movies of India.

And in the history of cultural exchange between India and Japan, it is worth citing the relationship to Japan of the first Asian Nobel laureate, poet, thinker, and composer, namely

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Rabindranath Tagore, a master poet who had earned a great deal of esteem. He wrote the lyrics and composed the national anthems of both India and Bangladesh, and was also founder of the Tagore International University.

From an early stage Tagore had a keen interest in Japan. He was a friend of Okakura Tenshin who visited India in 1902 (Meiji 35), a thinker and art historian who has bequeathed us the words, “Asia is one.” Their friendship continued until 1913 (Taisho 2), the year when Tenshin passed away.

On his first trip to Japan in 1916 Tagore visited the tomb of Okakura Tenshin, and read some poetry at the Rokkakudo (Hexagonal Temple) that is linked with him. Since that time he made five visits to Japan. Starting with Okakura Tenshin, he had close relationships to Kawaguchi Ekai, Noguchi Yone and others, and highly appreciated the aesthetic sense of the Japanese, as revealed in their love for nature.

Rash Behari Bose Seeking Asylum in Japan

In June 1915 (Taisho 4), an Indian youth arrived in Japan as a relative of Tagore’s. This young man hailed from the same Bengal region of India as Tagore, but was not a relative of Tagore’s. He was in reality Rash Behari Bose, a revolutionary striving for India’s independence.

He was a spiritual leader of the Indian freedom movement who had received the ideological influence of Aurobindo Ghose, an individual who was in search of India’s traditional beliefs, and he had committed himself to the Indian independence movement.

While serving as an official of the British Colonial Government he was at the Forest Research Institute in Dehradun as the Office Head, and he took part in the meetings of the Indian National Congress. In his job as chief clerical worker of the Forest Research Institute, he sought to incite the Gurkha soldiers with revolutionary ideas, and collected chemicals and other material for the production of bombs. He awaited a suitable opening for the launching of an Indian revolutionary war.

Governor General Charles Harding tried to fully crush the Indian freedom movement, and he deprived the Indian people of various basic human rights, by enacting the Indian Defence Law. Bose, in an attempt to assassinate him, threw a bomb and injured him. He was also believed to have been the mastermind at the “Lahore Uprising.” The British colonial government launched a hunt for him, and a reward of 12,000 rupees was placed on his head.

Nevertheless, when the First World War erupted in 1914 (Taisho 3), in response to the chaos that arose, patriots who sought to initiate a freedom uprising in India, began to work actively. Responding to this, Indian revolutionaries, who were exiled abroad, came into active contact with patriots in their home nation, and prepared for the start of a Revolutionary War. Accordingly, patriots who were exiled to nations like the United States which is geographically far from India, came to Japan in succession, since it was convenient for the maintenance of contact with their home country, and in Japan they worked with the Indian residents of Tokyo, making plans for India’s independence.

The defeat of Russia by Japan in the Russo-Japanese War was a font of hope and courage for Indians who had long toiled under the British yoke, and who desired independence. Young Indians who longed for Japan admired Emperor Meiji. They displayed His Imperial Portrait, as well as those of Count Nogi Maresuke and Marshal-Admiral Heihachiro Togo, within their residences.

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Also, there arose among young Indians an eagerness to study in Japan, and in the Taisho era many Indian youth were studying in Japan as foreign students. Indian Revolutionaries called upon these students to participate in the struggle for the nation's Independence, and hence in reality, many such students did join the independence movement. Tokyo in this way became a base of operations for patriots of the Indian Revolutionary War.

In Autumn of 1915 (Taisho 4), on the occasion of the coronation of Emperor Taisho, the Indians living in Tokyo held a celebration in honor of the enthronement at Seiyoken in Ueno. On this occasion they invited three Indian Freedom Fighters as guests to Japan from the USA, namely Lala Lajpat Rai, Heramba Lal Gupta, and Rash Behari Bose. Since numerous Japanese visitors were also invited to the celebration it was packed with people, yet spies sent by the British Embassy also managed to sneak in. Later, from reports sent by these spies to the embassy, it was revealed that Rash Behari Bose, who at that time was a wanted man, was present there.

Upon receiving their Embassy's report, the British government urged the government of Japan to deport those three freedom fighters, namely Rai, Gupta, and Bose. At that time the government of Japan had concluded and signed the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and so it promptly issued an order deporting those three Indians. Of the three Indians, Rai had already left for the USA just prior to the issuing of the deportation order, but the remaining two were deported.

By the time of the deadline for the deportation, there were no vessels bound for the United States. There were only ships via Shanghai, where British Hong-Kong or the United Kingdom had a concession. If the two fugitive Indians had boarded those ships, they would obviously have been captured by the British Government, arrested, and sentenced to death.

However, when Bose consulted Sun Yat Sen who was in exile in Japan with regard to this issue, Sun Yat Sen introduced the two of them to Toyama Mitsuru, who had been of assistance to him when he himself was in need of asylum, and asked for his help. Toyama immediately requested the government of Japan to grant them asylum, but the Japanese government unilaterally declared, "*Japan is currently at war with Germany. They are cooperators of the military organization of an enemy country,*" and decided never to consider granting them asylum.

Due to this exceptionally cold attitude of the Japanese government Toyama made an unusual decision. At 2:00 AM on December 1st of the same year, Toyama telephoned Uchida Ryohei, his relative and chief of the Black Dragon Society, and said, "*I want you to come immediately.*" When Uchida arrived at the residence of Toyama, he saw that his senior at the Genyosha, namely Sugiyama Shigemaru, had already arrived. When Uchida was seated, Toyama said:

"I am not sure if the concerned Indians are in collusion with Germany or not. However, as Indians, their spirit of dedication to the independence of their homeland must be supported. I have negotiated a great deal with the government, but I cannot legally speak about it.

I do not mind what dishonour accrues to me or even if I am imprisoned. Hence, I have decided to hide those two Indians. Since I am inept at this, I would like you to devise all the methods."

Uchida and Sugiyama, who concurred with Toyama's decision, vowed to take charge immediately. By attracting international attention and by shaking off the pursuit of the English and

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Japanese authorities, they embarked upon a plan to conceal the two Indians and enable their escape.

On the day prior to their deportation, while Bose and Gupta, who had not been informed by Toyama Mitsuru, were holding a press conference at the Imperial Hotel, a message arrived that said, *“I would like you to come to the residence of Toyama at Akasaka, because our Japanese comrades are having a get-together. They wish to have a farewell party.”*

When the two went to the residence of Toyama, they were promptly made to change into Japanese costumes and led into the backyard, and under the security of two members of the Black Dragon Society who were stalwarts at judo, they passed through the garden of an adjoining house that was linked to the place and entered a road at the back. Here they entered a car that was prepared for them. Not many cars were in circulation at that time, and yet the car that was prepared for them was a modern Packard, which when chased could run at a speed that could shake off pursuers. This vehicle was one of very few in Japan, and it was the property of Sugiyama Shigemaru.

An officer of the Metropolitan Police department who had been placed in charge of the Indians, had seen no sign whatsoever of their coming out after entering the Toyama residence finally made up his mind to check on them. He went to the front door of the residence and enquired about the Indians. On doing so however, the only answer he received was, *“They returned immediately. I know nothing about the rest.”*

After that, over 20 police officers searched the house of Toyama, but nothing was discovered. Accordingly, the investigators, guessing that perhaps Chinese Revolutionary officials had concealed them somewhere, finally ended their search of the Toyama residence. In actual fact however the two Indians remained concealed at Nakamura, a bakery located at Shinjuku in Tokyo.

The owners of Nakamura, namely Soma Aizo and Mr. and Mrs. Kuromitsu, were intellectuals from Shinshu and Azumino, and they were famous as sponsors of many painters and sculptors. They provided an atelier they had offered to painters, as a hideout for the two Indians. Of the two, Gupta later moved to the house of Okawa Shumei, but Bose still remained in the Nakamura atelier.

It was Uchida Ryohei who designed and organised the getaway plan for the two Indians, though the person mainly responsible for its execution was Kuzuu Yoshihisa, who had been his comrade since the founding of Uchida's Black Dragon Society, and who was active as the second chief of the Black Dragon Society after the death of Uchida.

This incident later served to trigger Okawa Shumei, who was extolled as an expert in colonial policy history and an oriental savant, to begin to get engaged in supporting the Indian independence movement, authoring the *“Current Situation and Origin of the National Movement in India.”* He highlighted the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, criticized Japan for standing on the side of the British, and made efforts to convey the current situation of India to the Japanese.

In due course, owing to the efforts of Toyama and others, the government of Japan during the same year revoked the deportation order of Bose. In consequence, Gupta departed for the United States where he was originally based, while Bose remained as he was in Japan.

End Part I - Part II of III will be presented in the July Issue of The Vedanta Kyokai.

• Story to Remember •

The Disciple

When Narcissus died the pool of his pleasure changed from a cup of sweet waters into a cup of salt tears, and the Oreads came weeping through the woodland that they might sing to the pool and give it comfort.

And when they saw that the pool had changed from a cup of sweet waters into a cup of salt tears, they loosened the green tresses of their hair and cried to the pool and said, 'We do not wonder that you should mourn in this manner for Narcissus, so beautiful was he.'

'But was Narcissus beautiful?' said the pool.

'Who should know that better than you?' answered the Oreads. 'Us did he ever pass by, but you he sought for, and would lie on your banks and look down at you, and in the mirror of your waters he would mirror his own beauty.'

And the pool answered, 'But I loved Narcissus because, as he lay on my banks and looked down at me, in the mirror of his eyes I saw ever my own beauty mirrored.'

- Oscar Wilde

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