



OCTOBER 2021 -VOLUME 19 NUMBER 10

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

November 2021 Calendar

KALI PUJA
Thursday, 4 November



See Page 2 for Details

Birthdays

**Swami
Subodhananda**
Tuesday,
16 November

**Swami
Vujnanananda**
Thursday,
18 November

Zushi Events

COVID restrictions have been lifted once again by the Japanese government as of 30 September 2021.

See page 02 for details!



✧ Thus Spake ✧

“Spiritual practice means to keep the mind steady at His lotus feet, and to be absorbed in His thoughts.

- Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi

“Mind is the forerunner of all activity; mind is the highest of all sensory powers. All relative concepts have their origin in the mind.”

- The Buddha



Autumn Outdoor Retreat in Ōme, Tokyo
story on page 3.

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Vedanta Society of Japan

Message Regarding Monthly Programmes for NOVEMBER 2021

COVID restrictions have been lifted once again by the Japanese government as of 30 September 2021. However, many precautions remain in place. Our monthly programmes and classes will continue with live-streams, video, and Zoom participation as noted in the schedule below.

Vedanta Society of Japan will continue to observe social distancing, mask wearing, and avoiding the crowding of programme areas. As such attendance to programmes remains space-limited, so please contact us if you wish to attend any of the programmes.

Swami Medhasananda, President
Vedanta Society of Japan

NOVEMBER 2021 Calendar of Programmes

4th (Thurs) November 18:45~20:45

Sri Sri Kali Puja

Zushi Annexe * Admission Limited - Contact Zushi Centre
Puja, Arati, Pushpanjali, Homa, Prasad.

6th (Sat) November

Bhagavad Gita Study Class at the Indian Embassy

* Video uploaded later

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

3rd (Sun) October - Live-streaming & Zoom

10th (Wed) November - Zoom

Weekly Upanishad Study Class

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

14th (Sun) November

Live Steaming and Zoom

Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna Study Class

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

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

17th (Wed) November - Zoom

Weekly Upanishad Study Class

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

21st (Sun) November

Live Streaming - PM Session bi-lingual

November Zushi Monthly Retreat 2021

23rd (Tue) November

Akhanda Japan

From 05:00 to 20:00

To participate please contact:

<vedanta.karmayoga(atmark)gmail.com>

24th (Wed) October - Zoom

Weekly Upanishad Study Class

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

< **Live Streaming** >

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

< **Online Study Class on Zoom** >

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

Ms. Shanti Izumida provides us the following report on
The Outdoor Retreat in Ome, Tokyo 2021

From October 22nd to 24th, the Society's 21st Outdoor Retreat was held at the 'Kampo Inn Ome' in Ome, Tokyo. There were 21 participants, including a few one-day participants. The Retreat was canceled last year due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, but this year it was held after Japan's the state of emergency restrictions were lifted on October 1st. Still, however, infection control measures required that facilities such as conference rooms, meeting rooms, and halls be observed with disinfectant wiping of all public and private room surfaces, that daily temperatures be taken, and that masks be worn throughout the Inn's facilities. All such measures were scrupulously observed by all.

The Outdoor Retreat is usually held during the warmth of summers, but this year it couldn't be held until autumn after restrictions had been lifted, and as soon as accommodations could be arranged. It was actually quite cold in this mountainous region in the outskirts of the Tokyo Metropolitan area. In fact, it was very cold and rainy on the first day, but from the second day we were blessed with clear, cloudless skies and warmer daytime temperatures.

There were daily scheduled activities, including outdoor morning meditations from 05:00, morning Vedic peace prayers, readings from the Bhagavad Gita, and devotional songs. There were morning and afternoon discourses, evening arati, more devotional songs and meditations. *(Daily Schedule follows this report)*

This year Swami Medhasanandaji's special lecture was 'The Practice of God-Consciousness: In Light of the Life of Sri Ramakrishna.' One practice described seeing Ramakrishna in all and behind all, and a new word to "Ramakrishna-ise" one's life was coined. This talk will be presented in future issues of *The Vedanta Kyokai* newsletter.

The Society's Assistant Minister, Swami Divyanathanandaji, also participated in an Outdoor Retreat for the first time, and in addition to participating in morning and evening worships and hymns, Divyanathanandaji gave a talk on 'Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi - The Mother of All'. *(In this issue of The Vedanta Kyokai)*

In the afternoons, we went for walks along the nearby riverbank just as we have done along the Ganga in India, 'Gangotri'. In the evening, Mr. Leonardo Alvarez sang 'Ave Maria', Mr. Steve Morgan sang the 'Japanese Moon Song', and other devotees performed songs. Ms. Yoko Sato performed her own hymns online for us. This reporter was applauded for my songs and keyboard accompaniments, too. Both swamis also sang together an Indian song "Dhono Dhanno Pushpe Bhora" with beautiful voices.

(con't page 4)

Participants were warmed in the glow of a spiritual family during the Retreat. It was a happy time of peace and calm in a holy atmosphere enjoyed by all. As always we thank the grace of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi for the success of this welcomed Outdoor Retreat. •

The following is the daily schedule of our Outdoor Retreat:

Ōme Retreat Schedule
October 22 (Fri.) ~ 24 (Sun.)

22 (Fri.)

10:15 Departure from Kyokai (Zushi Ashram)
12:00 Lunch at Restaurant
14:00 Hotel
18:00 Arati, Devotional Songs: Swami Divyanathanandaji & Shanti, Meditation
19:30 Supper
20:30 Satsanga
21:30 Conclusion

23 (Sat.)

04:50 Start out from the Hotel
05:00 Outdoor Meditation
06:00~6:50 Vedic prayer and Gita, Hymn: Swami Divyanathanandaji
07:00~8:00 Yoga
08:15~9:00 Breakfast
09:45 Discourse: Swami Medhasanandaji
12:00 Offering
12:15 Lunch *Group photo after lunch
14:15 Discourse: Swami Divyanathanandaji
15:45~17:00 Walking and tea
18:00 Arati, Devotional Songs: Swami Divyanathanandaji & Shanti, Meditation
19:30 Supper
20:30 Satsanga
21:30 Conclusion

24 (Sun.)

04:50 Start from the Hotel
05:00 Outdoor Meditation
06:00~6:50 Vedic prayer and Gita, Hymn: Swami Divyanathanandaji
07:00~8:00 Yoga
08:15~9:00 Breakfast
09:45 Discourse: Swami Medhasanandaji
12:00 Offering
12:15 Lunch
14:00 Q&A
15:30 Conclusion, final clean up, return to Zushi Ashram 18:30



Swami Divyanathananda gives talk In English and Mr. Leonardo Alvarez Translates to Japanese

Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, Mother of the Universe

A talk by Swami Divyanathananda

Mother is the symbol of love and compassion. The love of a mother towards her child is perhaps the purest form of human love. When we want to deepen our love for God, we develop a loving relationship with him. We want to make Him our very own, our all in all. We start regarding God as our father, our Mother, and our friend.

In case of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, we need not imagine that She is our Mother, for She is truly the Mother of all Her children. She Herself has declared, "I am your real Mother - not an adopted Mother. Whenever you are in distress, say to yourself, 'I have a Mother'."

Whenever the image of Holy Mother comes to mind, the first quality which comes to mind is Her compassion. A motherly heart had started manifesting in Saradamani (Sarada Devi) at a tender age. A famine had broken out in Bengal and Ramchandra Mukhopadhyay, Holy Mother's father,
(con't page 6)

• Thought of the Month •

"However you try to define meditation, it is not that."

- Swami Brahmanandaji

Holy Mother (from page 5)

decided to distribute cooked food, *Khichuri*, to the villagers. There we find, when the hot khichuri was being poured onto plates, young Sarada would fan them to cool the dish down more quickly.

Mother of the disciples of the Master

At Dakshineswar, when Sri Ramakrishna was still in His mortal body, Holy Mother was regarded as the Mother of His disciples. She would cook various kinds of food as per the taste of the disciples. One night she served more chapattis to Baburam Maharaj (Swami Premanandaji). When Thakur (Ramakrishna) complained, saying it is not proper for a spiritual aspirant to take too much food at night, Mother declared, 'I shall take the responsibility for my children'.

Swamiji (Swami Vivekanandaji) before leaving for Chicago, sought Her blessings and after His triumphant return, prostrated a full-length pranam, saying, 'By your blessings I have preached the message of the Master in the country of the whites'.

After the Master passed away, She went to various places of pilgrimage. During those days, the Master's monastic disciples were leading a very hard and austere life, and they often did not have enough funds to maintain themselves. She could not bear the Master's children going from door to door asking for alms, and She would constantly pray to all the deities of various temples that they get proper food and other necessities for the maintenance of their bodies.

She was not only the Mother of the monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, but Her motherhood was manifested towards all—to devotee, non-devotee, educated, uneducated, high-caste, low-caste, and even those who had fallen from a moral path. She was the Mother of both Eastern and Western peoples, and not only human beings, but of animals too!

Let me narrate a few incidents which reflect her Motherhood.

Nursing of Sick and Ailing Monks

Rajen Maharaj was a monastic worker at Koalpara Ramakrishna Yogashrama. One day he came to Jayrambati and expressed his desire to spend some time at Varanasi, as some friction had developed between him and the Ashrama head. Mother listened and advised him to come and stay at Jayrambati for some time. Holy Mother, every day after Her morning Puja would take some *sharbat* (rock-candy syrup) and breakfast. After Rajen Maharaj arrived, she would call him every day to Her room after the worship. She would then sip a little of this sherbet and give the rest for Rajen Maharaj to drink. That sharbet

Holy Mother (from page 6)

was very important for Her health, and although in the beginning Rajen Maharaj strongly refused to drink what was meant for Her, the force of Holy Mother's love soon reversed his refusals.

Sevak Brahmachari, who was staying at Jayrambati and looking after Mother's household, noticed Mother was offering Her sharbat to Rajen Maharaj when he was called to a corner and Mother quietly explained the situation to him. She related that due to his cooking chores at Koalpara, Rajen's brain had over-heated somewhat bringing on his trouble with the Ashrama authorities. Hence, this sharbat would help regain his health. In this case, Mother, ignoring Her own health, with loving care, solved Her disciple's problem.

Brahmachari Jnan, another monastic disciple of the Holy Mother, who was also staying at Jayrambati, developed some itch that became so painful he could not eat by his own hand. At this Mother would mix the food in his plate and feed him morsel by morsel by Her own hand.

Not Only Mother of Indian Devotees, but Those from Abroad As Well

Holy Mother was truly the Mother of the Universe. Her children were not limited to Indians, but She had children from foreign lands as well. When Sara Bull, Josephine McLeod, and Sister Nivedita met Her in Bosepara Lane, she received them affectionately. Although she could not communicate with them verbally, she could communicate in the language of the heart. When Ms. McLeod asked through an interpreter if they could eat with them, Mother agreed. In those days of strict orthodoxy, it was not easy for a Hindu widow to dine with a Westerner, but in the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'Love does not know what fear is'. Her overflowing love broke all caste restrictions.

The partaking of food with Holy Mother indicated the admission of those Western devotees into the Hindu community. Holy Mother fondly called Nivedita as 'Khuki' meaning small girl and McLeod as 'Jaya'.

Lay-worker in Her Household Wins Her Grace

Chandra Mohan Dutta came from a village in East Bengal to Kolkata roaming the streets in search of a job. He managed to get some work at the *Udbodhan*. He would do odd jobs there and would get paid for it. He would make some extra income by selling *Udbodhan* published books outside, and thus, slowly his financial condition started improving. However, as sometimes fortune turns upside down, he heard that his house had been washed away by an overflowing river and that his family was in a bad condition, as they were virtually on the street. He became tense with worry and anxiety overpowered

Holy Mother (from page 7)

him. Holy Mother, when She came to know of it, gave him three hundred rupees and asked him to go back to his hometown, secure a house and settle his family.

This is but one example of how an ordinary layman became one within Her loving fold. Later, Chandramohan would narrate these incidents with tearful eyes and a voice choked in emotion.

As Her household kept growing, somebody donated a cow to Holy Mother, the cow could be used to supply milk, and an orphan boy, called Govinda, was also employed to look after the cow. He did his job quite well. But after some days, the boy developed an itch and despite medical treatment, the condition did not improve. One night it became serious, and he was crying loudly out of severe pain. Holy Mother early next morning made a paste of turmeric and a particular leaf called 'Neem' and taught the boy how to apply it on his skin. This personal care by the Mother consoled the boy a lot and his face beamed with joy.

Here, what strikes us most is, generally we ignore the problems of people doing menial jobs, but to Holy Mother, even a lowly, ordinary person in Her household won Her loving concern.

The Mother of Not Only Human Beings, but of Animals Too!

Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita has declares:

O Arjuna, I am seated in the heart of all living entities. I am the beginning, middle, and end of all beings.

Amongst horses know me to be Ucchaihshrava, begotten from the churning of the ocean of nectar. I am Airavata amongst all lordly elephants, and the king amongst humans.

We mentioned about Govinda, who looked after the cow. Once it happened, the cow was bleating, apparently in excruciating pain, making everybody in the household uneasy. Holy Mother went to the cow and holding her with both hands patted the naval of the cow, as if she was Her own child. This brought relief to the cow.

There was also a myna bird, named Gangaram. Mynas can imitate sounds so naturally, and they can imitate human languages as well. Sometimes Gangaram would call, 'Mother, Oh Mother!' and Mother would answer its call and place some grain in front of it.

Holy Mother (from page 8)

Once a cat, which had lived in Holy Mother's household, died, and on the 13th day of the death, a feast for the monks was arranged by Holy Mother and devotional songs were sung by them.

Mother to Offenders and Those Who Have Fallen from a Moral Path

A certain direct disciple of the Master was once offended with the conduct of a devotee and asked Mother not to allow him come near Her, but the Mother instead said, *'If my son wallows in the dust or mud, it is I who have to wipe all the dirt and take him on my lap.'*

A worker at Belur Math once stole some money and Swami Vivekananda drove him away. The man felt helpless and ran to Udbodhan, where Holy Mother was staying. Mother learnt everything and asked the man to stay at the Mother's house for a few days. Then after a couple of days, she sent for Swami Premanandaji and asked him to take the man back, saying he has stolen money due to extreme poverty. Sometimes monks fail to understand problems of common men. When Premanandaji pleaded, saying Swamiji will be annoyed, Mother with emphasis said, 'I am saying, take him'. Swamiji when he learnt of everything, had no other option, but to take him back.

Resemblance to One's Own Mother

Rashbehari Maharaj lost his own mother at a tender age. There was a void in his heart all the time on account of that. When he saw Holy Mother for the first time he felt as if Mother had been waiting all the while to embrace him. His meeting Holy Mother changed his life forever.

Some devotees found resemblance in physical features with those of their own mother. A few of them, when they first met the Holy Mother, felt as though their own mother was seated in front of them.

Many devotees upon meeting Holy Mother for the first time, experienced the sensation that She had accepted them as though She had known them for a long time. Immediately, their initial hesitation was gone.

Rashbehari Maharaj once went to a different village for some work and he returned quite late in the afternoon. To his surprise he found the Mother had also not taken Her food. When Rasbehari Maharaj complained, saying Mother should have eaten, She replied, 'How can I eat unless you have taken food, my child!' Without any hesitation, Rasbehari Maharaj quickly finished his food, and Holy Mother and the other ladies present ate only after he had finished.

Conclusions

Questions will arise. What is the difference between a human mother and Holy Mother? Also, can a human mother love her child as Holy Mother loved her children?

We would say, there is little bit of self-interest in the heart of the human mother, but Holy Mother's love was un-alloyed. Her heart was already a full 'pitcher of bliss' and love simply overflowed from Her without seeking any return. She was 'LOVE' personified.

An ordinary mother usually loves her own child more than others, but Holy Mother's love for everyone was equal. Moreover, unlike an ordinary mother, although Her love was very deep, but it was devoid of any attachment.

Moreover, Holy Mother was the Mother of not only this world, but the world hereafter, too.

A human mother cannot remove all the wants of her children, She is bound by limitations. She can look after a child and take care of it to a certain extent, but Holy Mother is omnipotent. She is the giver of all human wants and needs including liberation. Can human motherhood bestow liberation? Certainly not.

It is extremely important for us to understand that Holy Mother is a part of our life, too. Let us bring Her down from the altar and give her a place in our bedroom, our kitchen and other places we occupy as well. Whenever we feel some vacuum or depression, let us turn to Her in full faith. She will feed our mind with strength and courage. Let us remember her words, "Whenever you are in distress, just say to yourself, 'I have a Mother'." •



Photos from the Autumn Retreat at the 'Kampo Inn Ome' in Ōme,, Tokyo



Swami Medhasananda takes a group snapshot with Kampo Inn Ome in the background



Classes



Meditations



• Story to Remember •

Have Total Faith in One

Bhai Gopal was a simple man. He was a very loving devoted Sikh of Guru Arjun Dev Ji, the 5th Guru. He worked honestly at his job. He kept a storage facility. Everyone trusted him with their belongings, and he would store things for them. One time a man named Jamaal Khan came to his storage office to leave 500 gold coins for storage. But being quite busy that day, Bhai Gopal failed to properly register and secure the coins.

Later, Jamaal Khan came back and asked for his coins to be returned. Bhai Gopal looked around for Jamaal Khan's coins, but didn't find them. He asked Jamaal Khan if he was sure that he had asked Bhai Gopal to store his coins. At this Jamaal Khan got angry and said "You stood right there and told me that you would take care of them. What kind of a fool do you think I am?" So Bhai Gopal went and checked again, but he still didn't find the coins.

Jamaal Khan then brought Bhai Gopal before the Emperor. The Emperor knew that Bhai Gopal was a Sikh of the Guru, and that he would not lie about the affair. He also knew that Jamaal Khan wouldn't lie either. So the Emperor asked for a big bowl to be filled with hot oil and a coin. He then said that both of them would have to try to pick out the coin from inside the bowl of hot oil. Both men were shocked at this solution, but Bhai Gopal folded his hands in prayer and said, "Guru-ji, you are my protector, you always take care of me when I am in need. I know you will save me now." Saying this he reached his hand into the burning hot oil and he got the coin out. His hand was not burned or injured at all!

So Jamaal Khan, too, folded his hands in prayer to all the saints for help, protection, and safety. After his prayers he reached into the pot to try and get the coin at the bottom. He had barely touched the oil when he yelled in pain, "Ouch! My finger's burnt!" He immediately withdrew his hand.

Sometime later Bhai Gopal found Jamaal Khan's coins in a corner of his storage building office. Relieved, he rushed to give Jamaal the good news, but he refused to take the coins saying that since Bhai Gopal had embarrassed him in front of the Emperor, he was to keep the coins for himself. Bhai Gopal refused saying, "I'm a Sikh of the Guru, I can't take what's not mine." Jamaal Khan then agreed to accept the coins on the condition that Bhai Gopal take him to meet his Guru-ji.

Delighted, Bhai Gopal took Jamaal Khan to meet Guru-ji, where Jamaal then explained to Guru-ji that both of them had been honest about the coins, but that he got burned, while Bhai Gopal did not. "Why was that?"

Guru-ji replied, "When Bhai Gopal did his *Ardās*, he did so with total faith. When you prayed, you called on several saints, but you did not have total faith in any one of them." Jamaal Khan was amazed that Guru-ji knew his thoughts, and both Jamaal and Bhai felt very blessed and spiritually elevated just being in the presence of Guru-ji.

Moral – *The universe answers our prayers to the same degree our faith believes it will. A person who prays with a pure heart, with their whole being, and with a deep focus of mind, truly that person's prayers will come to be.*

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