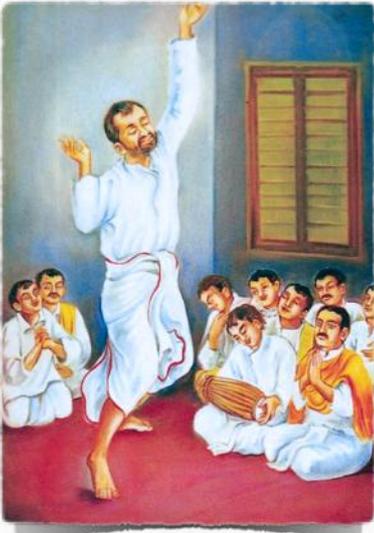




AUGUST 2022 -VOLUME 20 NUMBER 08

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN



Birthdays

Swami Abhedananda
Monday, 19 September

Swami Akhandananda
Sunday, 25 September

Thus Spake

"By repeating a hundred times, 'I am a sinner', one verily becomes a sinner. One should have such faith as to be able to say, 'What? I have taken the name of God; how can I be a sinner?' God is our Father and Mother. Tell Him, 'O Lord, I have committed sins, but I won't repeat them.' Chant His name and purify your body and mind. Purify your tongue by singing God's holy name."

— Sri Ramakrishna

"Ye are the Children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth-sinners! It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter."

— Swami Vivekananda



15th August 2022 marked the 76th Independence Day of India. Ramakrishna - Vivekananda tradition is very closely linked to India's Freedom Fighters. Mahatma Gandhi said that his love for India increased a thousand fold after going through Vivekananda's works. Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, said that his generation was widely influenced by Vivekananda. Bal Gangadhar Tilak compared Vivekananda to Shankaracharya. Subhash Chandra Bose considered Vivekananda to be his spiritual teacher. He called Vivekananda a "full-blooded masculine personality – and a fighter to the core of being".

In this Issue:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------|--|---------|
| • Thus Spake / Birthdays | page 01 | • Sri Krishna
Talk by Swami Divyanathananda | page 04 |
| • Monthly Program Schedule | page 02 | • Spiritual Retreat Photographs | page 07 |
| • Sri Krishna Birthday Schedule | page 03 | • Story to Remember | page 09 |

Vedanta Society of Japan

Message Regarding Monthly Programmes for September 2022

Although COVID restrictions imposed by the Japanese government with the recent wave of the Omicron variant have been partially lifted, many precautions will remain in place.

Vedanta Society of Japan continues to observe social distancing, mask wearing, and avoid crowding in programme areas. Attendance to the Zushi Monthly Retreat and participation in other programs remains space limited, so please contact us if you wish to attend either of these programmes.

Swami Medhasananda, President
Vedanta Society of Japan

SEPTEMBER 2022 Calendar of Programmes

3rd (Sat) September

Bhagavad Gita Study Class at the Indian Embassy

* Video uploaded later

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

7th (Wed) September

Weekly Upanishad Study Class

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

14th (Wed) September

Weekly Upanishad Study Class

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

18th (Sun) September

Monthly Zushi Retreat

Speaker: Swami Medhasananda

Topic: Understanding our Personality: The Criterion of Triguna

Bi-Lingual Live Streaming [Click here](#) to go to YouTube



Sri Krishna Birthday Celebration

シュリー・クリシュナ生誕祝賀会

Vedanta Society of Japan, Zushi

Date : Sunday, 21st August, 2022

日本ヴェーダーンタ協会、逗子

日時 : 2022年8月21日(日)

Programme

10 : 30	Meditation	瞑想
11 : 00	: Chanting: Vedic Mantras and Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 12)	朗唱: ヴェーダのマントラ 輪読: バガヴァッド・ギーター第12章
	: Reading from the Bhagavatam	バーガヴァタムより
	: Kirtan (Chorus): (1) Govinda Jaya Jaya (2) Hare Krishna	キルタン: ゴヴィンダ・ジャイジャイ ハレ・クリシュナ
	: Discourse: 'Life Episodes and Teachings of Sri Krishna'	講話: 主題「シュリー・クリシュナ: 人生 の出来事と教え」
	Speaker: Swami Divyanathanandaji	講師: スワーミー・ディビヤナターナンダ
	Interpreter: Leonardo Alvarez	師
		通訳: レオナルド・アルヴァレス
12 : 30	Lunch Prasad	食事 (プラサード)
14 : 45	: Chanting	賛歌
	: Discourse: 'Sri Krishna'	講話: 主題「シュリー・クリシュナ」
	Speaker: Swami Medhasanandaji	講師: スワーミー・メダサーナンダ
	Interpreter: Leonardo Alvarez	通訳: レオナルド・アルヴァレス
	: Songs: Swami Divyanathanandaji	閉会の歌: スワーミー・ディビヤナターナンダ
16 : 30	Tea	お茶
18 : 30	Aratrik Bhajan	夕拝

Talk on Sri Krishna

By Swami Divyanathananda

Bhagavan Sri Krishna, who came down on earth as a saviour of mankind, was born in a prison at Mathura. Immediately after birth, He was transferred to Gokula and later to Vrindavana, where divine traits started manifesting slowly. He was much loved and adored by the cowherd tribe of Gokula and they started regarding Him as their leader. The Rasa Lila of Vrindavana, where He multiplied Himself into many forms and danced with the Gopis is well-known. Later, He went to Mathura, killed Kamsa, released His parents from the prison and installed Ugrasena as the king of Mathura. In the Kurukshetra war, He took the side of the Pandavas, taking the position of the charioteer of Arjuna. The Bhagavad Gita was told as a sermon in this war.



Sri Krishna, by His extra-ordinary life and charming personality has left a deep impact on the life of Indian sub-continent and the world outside till today. His teachings in the Bhagavad Gita have proved to be a gospel for mankind for its unique way of addressing men and women of various stations of life. His life and deeds, as recorded in *Srimad Bhagavatam* continue to attract devotees as honey attracts bees.

As He Himself has said, the primary purpose of a divine incarnation is protection of Dharma, so we find Him carrying out His mission of upholding Dharma throughout His life. Releasing his parents from prison, taking the side of Pandavas in the Kurukshetra war, protecting the honour of Draupadi in the court of Dhritarashtra and killing many demons and tyrant kings are but a few of those incidents which testify this fact.

In His personality we find a rare combination of head and heart. On one side, sermons of great height because of their practical approach and intellectual brilliance like Bhagavad Gita, Anu Gita and Uddhava Gita speak about His mighty intellect. And on the other side, his tender heart, which could respond to every human emotion, has made Him an ideal for millions of persons all over the world to follow. Whoever came in touch with him felt His magic touch. He was not only a philosopher and mystic, but always active too. He was active throughout His life only for the good of others.

We shall discuss a few of the divine *lilas* or divine plays from His life.

Once in a certain place some brahmins were preparing to do a great sacrifice. Elaborate preparations were made for that. In the meanwhile Sri Krishna with the cowherd boys was playing and grazing the cows. He was feeling hungry and being omniscient, He knew that preparations of a great sacrifice was in progress nearby and food could easily be procured from there. So He asked some of His friends to fetch food from there. Accordingly, some cowherd boys went to the place of sacrifice and addressing the Brahmins said, 'You must have heard about Sri Krishna and Balarama. They are tending cattle nearby, and are feeling hungry. Can you give some food for them?'



Those Brahmins, whose mind was focussed on temporal results of rituals, did not pay much notice to them and pretending that they hadn't heard anything, remained quiet and indifferent. Naturally, these shepherd boys felt disappointed and went back to Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna, when he heard about the attitude of the

Brahmins, laughed at them and asked them to meet the wives of those Brahmins and to get some food from them since they knew Him and had much love and respect for Him in their hearts. Accordingly, they went back to the living quarters of the Brahmins, met the women, and requested some food for Sri Krishna. Now the wives of these Brahmins had already heard much about Krishna and His deeds, and had high regard and adoration for Him. Their minds were already fixed on His lotus feet, so naturally, when they heard that Sri Krishna wanted food from them, they rushed to the place where He and His brother were tending cattle. It was indeed a memorable day of their life as they saw Sri Krishna for the first time. They had taken four kinds of food- well cooked and nicely flavoured.

Addressing them, Sri Krishna said, 'Blessed are those who are able to surrender their body and mind upon Me. Your life's purpose is fulfilled. Now go back to your family, for the sacrifice can't be done without your presence'. When they heard Sri Krishna saying so, they couldn't bear it. They said, 'Oh Lord! We have already offended our husband and other family members, they won't accept us. Moreover, we have offered everything to You, so please accept us. Allow us to stay with you'. Sri Krishna said, 'No, please don't worry, surely they will accept you'. Reluctantly they went back, and their family members did not show any signs of annoyance.



Then, those Brahmins, who were preparing for the sacrifice came to their senses. They started feeling repentance for ignoring the cowherd boys and felt within themselves, 'These women in our homes don't have much learning and have not studied the scriptures, nor do they have knowledge about rituals, etc. Just by virtue of pure devotion to the lotus feet of the Lord, they were able to get His vision, whereas we, who have so much knowledge of the scriptures, have not gained anything worthwhile in our life owing false pride of learning. Actually, the above play was intended by Sri Krishna to bless the wives of those Brahmins, who for a long time had been contemplating on Him. Also, it is a teaching for all of us, that rituals, learning of scriptures, great austerities are fruitless unless they are aimed at attaining devotion to the Supreme Iswara.

Another story:

Once there lived a pious brahmin, called Sudama, who was a friend of Sri Krishna. Sudama led a householder's life. He was learned in scriptures, devoted to God and led an austere life and being a man of renunciation, he lived on what only chance would bring. Naturally, He was poor and lived on the bare minimum. One day, His wife, unable to bear extreme poverty asked him to visit and meet Sri Krishna as she knew Him to be a lover of pious men. Sudama's wife wanted to send him to Sri Krishna and seek some financial help. Reluctantly he went, for he did not want to ask Sri Krishna for any money. However, feeling that it would be an opportunity to meet Him again, he went. His wife gave him a packet of flattened rice to be offered to Sri Krishna. Finally, when he reached Dwaraka, the kingdom of Sri Krishna, seeing him from a distance Sri Krishna himself rose from His seat and brought him inside the

• Thought of the Month •

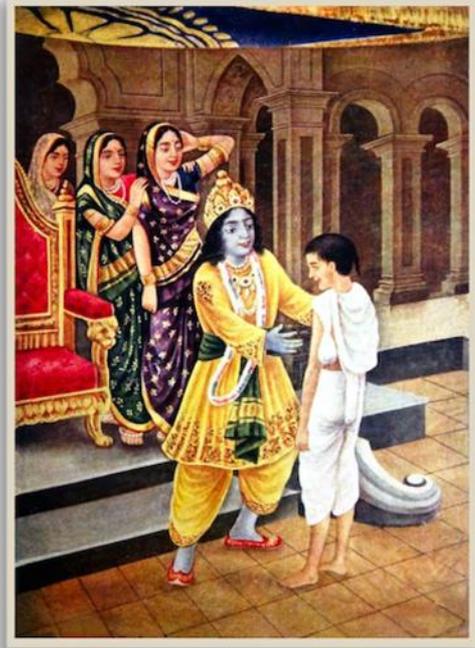
"A tremendous Divine Power is working for the good of mankind. Through your spiritual practice come directly in touch with that and grow in spirituality and also in the spirit of service."

- Swami Yatishwarananda

room. He and Rukmini fanned him, washed his feet, gave him a seat, and did all they could to make him comfortable.

Then Krishna and Sudama started talking about their sweet days at their teacher's abode in their younger days. Then He asked Sudama, whether he had brought anything for Him. Sudama was hesitant in handing over the packet of flattened rice given by his wife. Sri Krishna said, 'whatever is offered to me with devotion, I accept'. Saying so, Sri Krishna Himself took the packet which was tied to the corner of Sudama's cloth and started eating the flattened rice. Sri Krishna, who was able to know the inner thoughts of all, knew that Sudama had not come there to ask of wealth. Therefore, he decided to make him rich and wealthy, although unasked for.

Sudama stayed at Krishna's house for one night and started for his home next morning, all the way feeling gratitude for Sri Krishna for his kind hospitality. He did not ask of Him any wealth, for He was ashamed of doing that, however He was feeling extremely happy in meeting Him. But when he reached home, he saw, in place of the thatched house where he lived in, a beautiful mansion and the entire area filled with park, garden and fountains. He met his wife, who was completely changed in attire. She was dressed in attractive clothes and was not looking as weak and pale as before. He understood that all these had happened by the grace of Krishna. Although he had not asked of wealth, yet Sri Krishna had given him prosperity. However, his renunciation was strong, he wanted to give up all worldly comforts, yet he stayed within them to please his wife, devoid of any attachment, like a lotus leaf.



Contemplating on the above anecdote, devotees will be able to understand, that although He is very far from us owing to our ignorance and our mind filled with desires to attain worldly riches, yet, He is very near to him, who has renounced all his worldly desires and focussed his heart and mind to attain His lotus feet.

Another divine play from His life is as follows:

Once the gopas were making elaborate preparations for a ritual to Indra. Although being omniscient but pretending to be fully ignorant about the purpose of the sacrifice, Sri Krishna went to Nanda, his foster father, and asked him, why they were doing the sacrifice.

Nanda replied, 'Indra is the giver of rainfalls, We are dependent on rainfall for crops, our very living is dependent on rainfall. So, Indra the God of rains must be propitiated, hence this sacrifice'. Krishna said, 'human life is borne out of Karma. One's suffering, happiness, etc. everything is due to his Karma. Why do you want to please Indra? Moreover, we are not farmers, we are a cowherd tribe. Instead of offering these gifts to Indra, let us offer these to Govardhana mountain, brahmins and cows'. The Gopas had a lot of respect in His words and did as He instructed. He Himself assumed a huge form and partook of the offerings. Then He asked all to circumambulate the Govardhana Hill.



In the meanwhile, Indra was observing all these, when he saw that the offerings had not reached him, he became angry. He made heavy rain to fall on Gokula. Heavy and torrential rains with lightning and thunder

came down on the place. The people were all frightened and started running here and there. Sri Krishna understood, it is the act of Indra. He then decided to crush his pride. So, He lifted the Govardhan Hill on His little finger and asked all to assemble under the Hill. For seven days he held the Hill and the gopas were saved due to that. Indra's pride abated, he stopped the rain and thunder.

When Arjuna asked Sri Krishna to take his chariot in front of the opposition party, he saw that His opposition party consists of His relatives and elders. He was down with remorse and said, the he won't fight the war. It was then that the Bhagavad Gita was told as a sermon to bring him up from that despondency. Like Arjuna, we common men are also caught up in conflict in day-to-day life. Sri Krishna's Bhagavad Gita has offered us solutions to combat these issues of daily life.

The gist of the teachings of Bhagavad Gita can be summarised as below:

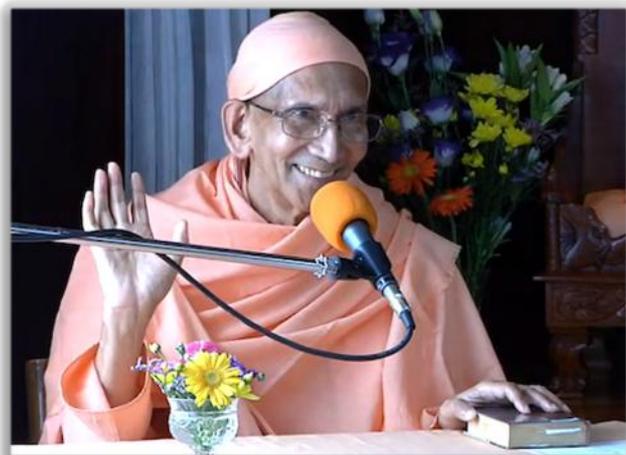
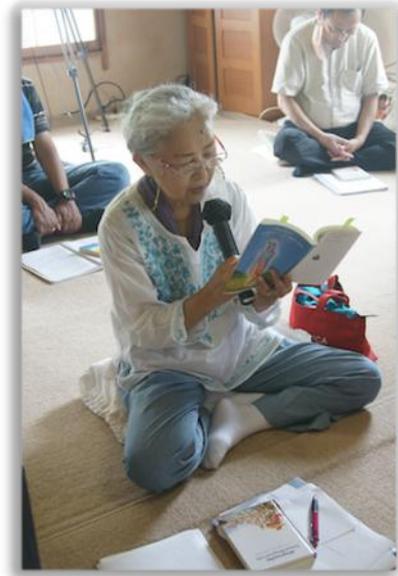
- We all are souls, pure and immortal. The body and mind only undergo change.
- Do all work without attachment, surrendering the fruits of all to Me.
- The senses, if uncontrolled lead us to destruction. So it is important to control our senses.
- Develop devotion to Me by meditation, prayer, holy company, and worship.
- Lead a moral life as far as possible.
- Know Me to be the Supreme Self. I reside in the heart of all, guiding the action of every person. There is nothing higher nor greater than Me. If you know me thus, you will be free from the endless cycle of birth and death.

If one can make Bhagavad Gita the gospel of one's life, then he will be able to address all sorrows and sufferings. Thus Sri Krishna has become the charioteer of entire humanity.



Some Photographs from the Monthly Spiritual Retreat





• Story to Remember •

Maybe So, Maybe Not, We'll See



A farmer and his son had a beloved stallion who helped the family earn a living. One day, the horse ran away and their neighbors exclaimed, “Your horse ran away, what terrible luck!”

The farmer replied, “Maybe so, maybe not. We’ll see.”

A few days later, the horse returned home, leading a few wild mares back to the farm as well. The neighbors shouted out, “Your horse has returned, and brought several horses home with him. What great luck!”

The farmer replied, “Maybe so, maybe not. We’ll see.”

Later that week, the farmer’s son was trying to break one of the mares and she threw him to the ground, breaking his leg. The villagers cried, “Your son broke his leg, what terrible luck!”

The farmer replied, “Maybe so, maybe not. We’ll see.”

A few weeks later, soldiers from the national army marched through town, recruiting all the able-bodied boys for the army. They did not take the farmer’s son, still recovering from his injury. Friends shouted, “Your boy is spared, what tremendous luck!”

To which the farmer replied, “Maybe so, maybe not. We’ll see.”

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