



MAY 2023 -VOLUME 21 NUMBER 05

# The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN



## Thus Spake

The secret of health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, nor to worry about the future, but to live the present moment wisely and earnestly.

- Buddha

The realization of God is the goal of human life. Prepare yourself through prayer, meditation, and good deeds to receive the grace of God.

- Sarada Devi

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## Monthly Program Schedule for JUNE 2023

3rd (Sat)

### Swami Vivekananda Birthday Celebration

Venue: Vivekananda Culture Center, Embassy of India

Prior registration by email ([vivekananda.event@gmail.com](mailto:vivekananda.event@gmail.com)) by 29<sup>th</sup> May

7th (Wed)

**Weekly Upanishad Study Class**  
8:30 ~ 9:30 (in Japanese only), Zoom

10th (Sat)

**Bhagavad Gita Study Class at the Indian Embassy**  
10:30 ~ 12:00 (In Japanese only)  
Video uploaded later

13th (Tue)

**Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna Study Class**  
14:00 ~ 16:00 (in Japanese only), Zoom

18th (Sun)

**Monthly Retreat at Zushi**  
10:30 ~ 16:30  
Bilingual Live Streaming  
Speaker: Swami Divyanathananda

21st (Wed)

**Weekly Upanishad Study Class**  
8:30 ~ 9:30 (in Japanese only), Zoom

## What is Common to All Yogas

Swami Medhasananda

As you all know, yoga has become quite popular throughout the world. The UN too has declared one day of the year as International Yoga Day. Even Muslim and communist countries do some Yoga to observe the International Yoga Day.

In India we use the word “Yoga” to mean spiritual practices, but when I came to Japan, I observed, the Japanese pronounce it as “yogaa”. Then I used to wonder why it is being pronounced in that way. Later I understood that Yoga pronounced as “yogaa” means Hatha Yoga which is mostly centered on the body. In India when we say “Yoga”, we mean spirituality.

While the physical part of Yoga is generally called Hatha Yoga the spiritual aspects of Yoga are known as Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, etc. It is quite disheartening that most of the people who do physical yoga, do not have any idea that Yoga has an ethical and spiritual side also, nor do they have any interest in them.

Now, what is the purpose of the practice of physical aspect of Yoga? Is it only to be able to live well and to live long? In Hollywood, we have a center of the Ramakrishna Mission and once some film actors and actresses used to visit that centre as they thought that doing Yoga would help them to prevent having wrinkles on their faces and their skin would look bright; and it would slow down their aging process. So, the objective of yoga and meditation for them was basically secular and not spiritual.

The ancient sages of India lived their lives for attaining the highest Self and taught others to do the same. Then how could they connect Yogasana and Pranayama with spiritual life as physical Yoga and spiritual Yoga are quite opposite to each other. Since the more spiritual one wants to be, the more he has to reduce his body consciousness.

The main reason for bringing Yogasana and Pranayama to spiritual life is the following. To realize the Atman or Brahman or God, it takes a long time of continuous practice. It doesn't happen quickly. Even for mastering mundane skills such as music, dance, etc., it takes a long time. Spiritual advancement also takes a long time to achieve. Moreover, if the body is not fit and strong, we cannot practice spiritual disciplines. So, there are two prerequisites for embarking on this long path to Spiritual evolution - a strong and healthy body, and a long life. For both of these two, practice of Yogasanas and Pranayama are necessary.

One of the unique characteristics of our Indian sages was, whatever subject they would take up for study, they would work on it till the very end. They would not leave anything half-way. Now the problem is, Hatha Yoga in the beginning was a subsidiary yoga, but unfortunately most of the its practitioners deviated from the main path of the Yoga and their bodies became their all-in-all. The objective of hatha yoga became only to live a long life and to have a healthy body. But a healthy body and a long life in order to realize the Highest Truth was lost sight of.

Now, what is the meaning of the word- Yoga? It means Union. Union of the individual self and the Supreme Self. Or union of *bhakta* and *Bhagavan*. The word Yoga also suggests the methods to achieve that union. Most people have no idea about what is *Atman* or *Paramatman* or *Bhagavan*. So, to them we can offer this simple definition, which will be easy to understand and they will be motivated- "Yoga is an ideal way of life". How can it be an ideal way of life? Because this life will lead to goals which everyone wants. And what are those goals?

Those who have had some experience of real life know that even though money, food, house, profession, family etc. are important, what is more important is to have continued joy. For all want joy, none wants suffering. It is when we experience life and advance in age that we understand this important point. Most people in their youth will not be able to appreciate this but they will understand and appreciate the importance of having joy when they gain some experiences of the tough challenges of life.

The second goal is mental peace. Many of us have peace in our life, but peace is not steady. This

moment there is peace, the next moment we feel lack of peace. The third goal is seeking knowledge. We all have knowledge about many things, but we don't have that Supreme Knowledge. The fourth goal is to be fearless. All of us have worries and fears, especially the fear of death. How to be fearless? And finally, the goal of attaining freedom.

An ideal life means, having these goals and achieving them. And Yoga shows us also how to achieve them by leading an ideal life. So, first we have to know clearly what an ideal way of life is. And then, we should know about how to be able to live such an ideal life.

Now, would you call me sectarian, if I say, all religions are actually different forms of Yoga? Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam - all these religions are Yoga, because, although the path of each religion is different, but all of them aim at union with God. And that is what Yoga is all about. And if we look from the standpoint of the five objectives of life which I pointed out above, is it not that followers of every religion aim at: Joy, Peace, Knowledge, Fearlessness and Freedom? In that way also, all religions are but different forms of Yoga.

In traditional Indian yoga system, we have Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Raja Yoga and Bhakti Yoga and then each chapter of Bhagavad Gita is also one kind of Yoga - as we know that each chapter of Bhagavad Gita ends with the suffix Yoga. Now my question is why there should be so many types of Yogas?

The main reason is different people have different aptitudes and levels of capabilities. Sri Ramakrishna has explained this fact in a simple way as follows: A mother who has several children, cooks different kinds of dishes of some fish according to the taste and power of digestion of each child. One dish may be made with rich spices, one dish may be with just fried ingredients, another with only boiled ingredients, whereas another may be a very simple curry.

In the very same way, different kinds of spiritual practices are recommended for different people having varied aptitudes and tastes and capabilities. For example, spiritual aspirants who have an emotional temperament are recommended to follow Bhakti Yoga, where they are advised to turn their love and emotions towards God. In that way, they will be able to transcend their worldly love and experience divine love.

Some people are focussed on work, even for a moment they cannot live without work. For them Karma Yoga is recommended, where they are advised to work without any self-interest and without expecting any returns. The third type of aspirant, who wants to live quietly, avoiding the company of other people and wants to spend time in deep thinking, for them Raja Yoga is recommended. The basic practice of Raja yoga is control of mind and senses and focussing on the mind. The fourth type are those, who possess an analytical mind and who want to know the real nature of everything. For them Jnana Yoga is recommended. They always try to discriminate between what is apparent and what is real, what is relative and what is absolute, what is eternal and what is non-eternal, etc. and then they try to focus on what is real, absolute and eternal. Thus, for people having different types of temperament, different kinds of Yoga are

recommended.

There is another Yoga, which combines all the Yogas, it is called the Harmonistic Yoga or Samanvaya Yoga, which harmonises all these four Yogas. There are some people who want to taste all kinds of food, rather than one food only. They don't like to practice only one Yoga exclusively, rather they want to practice all of them in parts according to their capacity.

We shall now show you the monogram of the Ramakrishna Mission, and explain how Swami Vivekananda established Samanvaya Yoga, the harmony of all the four Yogas in the Mission monogram. In the monogram, first we see a serpent, then the rising sun, then the waves of water and then a lotus and in the middle of it a swan.

First of all, the snake symbolises *kundalini*, one's spiritual potentiality which lies dormant at the bottom of our spinal cord, the *muladhara* in the form of a snake. By spiritual practices, it is possible to awaken the *kundalini* and raise it to the aspirant's head. Thus the *kundalini* gets united with the Paramatman.



The wavy waters denote Karma, the rising sun symbolises Jnana and the lotus symbolises Bhakti. With appearance of the sun, darkness disappears. The sun symbolises Jnana Yoga. When knowledge is attained, ignorance is dispelled. Then we see the waves. Waves of an ocean are continuously appearing and disappearing. In the same way, when we are at work, we observe a continuous movement in us – in our body, our senses, our mind and intelligence. In the case of water in a lake, if there is no wind, then the water remains still. But if there is wind the water loses its stillness and there is a stir in it.

Then the lotus symbolises Bhakti. Why? Because when we worship a deity, we offer a flower and lotus is special among flowers. So, by integrating all these various paths, we can attain Paramatman. At the bottom of the logo the following is written: तन्नो हंसः प्रचोदयात् (Tanno Hansa Prachodayat) – May the swan give us the supreme knowledge. When Swamiji was in the west, he gave the ideas to an artist to draw a picture of the logo for the Ramakrishna Mission and the artist designed the logo.

To give you an example of how to integrate the four Yogas, we shall describe the daily schedule of a typical Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama. In the early morning, the monastics get up and do meditation. This is the practice of Raja Yoga. Because to meditate effectively, we have to withdraw our mind from the thoughts of the world and fix it at the lotus feet of our chosen deity. Then we have chanting of the Bhagavad Gita and other hymns. The *Mangalarati*, evening *arati*, offering of food and flowers to God, practice of Japa, prayer, etc. constitute Bhakti Yoga.

Then we have so many services here done by the monks and by the devotees: service in the office, in the garden, in the kitchen, books sales, planning and programming for events and

celebrations, attending to devotees and guests etc. All these constitute Karma Yoga. We have some work which we do daily and then before special events, we have more, where several devotees also come and take part. The devotees who come here do not serve for getting any recognition or money. They just give their service without expecting any return from their service. This is how we practice Karma Yoga, thinking of the work as the Lord's work.

Then there is Jnana Yoga. The monks and devotees are advised to always discriminate between the real and the unreal, between the transitory and permanent so that they slowly release themselves from desires and attachments and focus on the Real. However, it is an internal practice. Moreover, we have the study of scriptures. We hold classes for scriptures such as the Bhagavad Gita and Upanishads. In addition, we study them on our own too. All these constitute the practice of Jnana Yoga.

Swamiji has designed the activities of Ramakrishna Mission in such a way, that all the Yogas can be combined and that is how we are practicing harmony of the Yogas. Just by following this particular schedule, one can realize God. One need not go to a solitary place, away from society and practice meditation. If with understanding and devotion one follows a schedule such as this for a continued period, then one can surely realize God. And this schedule can be followed by not only monks staying in an Ashrama, but also by the devotees in their family and profession.

Swamiji's idea of harmony of Yogas is a new thing. Traditionally all these Yogas have been there and in the Bhagavad Gita also these have been mentioned. But how to combine and harmonize them has not been explained. Swamiji's schedule of the Ramakrishna Mission illustrates how we can combine all these Yogas.

*(to be continued ...)*

### • Thought of the Month •

“This is the true joy in life, being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one. Being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it what I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.”

- George Bernard Shaw





**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: 160th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**  
**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: 130th ANNIVERSARY OF VISIT TO JAPAN**

Date: Saturday, 3rd June, 2023. 2:00 p.m.- 5:30 p.m. (Hall opens at 1:30 p.m.)

**スワミー・ヴィヴェーカーナンダ第160回生誕記念祝賀会**  
**スワミー・ヴィヴェーカーナンダ第130回来日記念**

日 時：2023年6月3日（土）午後2時～5時半（開場午後1時半）

**Venue** : Vivekananda Cultural Centre, Embassy of India  
2-2-11 Kudan-minami, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo

**Speech** : 'Swami Vivekananda's Concept of Yogas'

**場所**：ヴィヴェーカーナンダ文化センター、インド大使館  
東京都千代田区九段南2-2-11

**スピーチ**：「スワミー・ヴィヴェーカーナンダのヨーガの概念」

Prior Registration by mail ([vivekananda.event@gmail.com](mailto:vivekananda.event@gmail.com)) by May 29, 2023  
2023年5月29日までにメール ([vivekananda.event@gmail.com](mailto:vivekananda.event@gmail.com)) で事前登録をお願いします。





**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: 160th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**  
**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: 130th ANNIVERSARY OF VISIT TO JAPAN**  
**スワミー・ヴィヴェーカーナンダ第160回生誕記念祝賀会**  
**スワミー・ヴィヴェーカーナンダ第130回来日記念**



Jointly organised by Embassy of India, Tokyo & Vedanta Society of Japan

共催：在日インド大使館及び日本ヴェーダーンタ協会

You are cordially invited to attend. 心よりご参加くださいますよう請んでご案内申し上げます。

**Date:** Saturday, 3rd June, 2023. 2:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m. (Hall opens at 1:30 p.m.)  
**Venue:** Vivekananda Cultural Centre, Indian Embassy, 2-2-11 Kudan-minami, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo  
**Programme highlight:** Theme of the speech: 'Swami Vivekananda's Concept of Yogas'; Cultural Programme  
**日時:** 2023年6月3日(土) 午後2時~5時半 (開場午後1時半)  
**場所:** ヴィヴェーカーナンダ文化センター、インド大使館：東京都千代田区九段南2-2-11  
**主なプログラム:** スピーチのテーマ：「スワミー・ヴィヴェーカーナンダのヨーガの概念」、文化交流プログラム

**Speakers**  
講演者

**Cultural Programme**  
文化交流プログラム



**H. E. Mr. Sibi George**  
Ambassador of India to Japan  
シビ・ジョージ閣下  
駐日インド大使



**Dr. Kathy Matsui**  
Professor, Seisen University  
松井 ケティ博士  
清泉女子大学教授



**Dr. Takahiro Kato**  
Associate Professor,  
Tokyo University  
加藤 隆宏博士  
東京大学准教授



**Mr. Leonardo Alvarez**  
Translator, Psychologist  
アルバレス・レオナルド氏  
翻訳者、心理学者



**Jyoukei Sato**  
Nun, Zentsuji School of  
Shingon Buddhism  
佐藤 浄圭  
尼僧、真言宗普門寺派



**Indian Folk Dances**  
インド民族舞踊

**Vote of thanks:** Mrs. Kanika Aggarwal, Director, Vivekananda Cultural Centre, Embassy of India  
**感謝の言葉:** カニカ・アガルウォール氏、ディレクター、ヴィヴェーカーナンダ文化センター、インド大使館

**Exhibition:** Books on Hinduism, Meditation, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda in Japanese and English.  
**Light snacks will be distributed among the attendees.**

\*No Admission charge.

**展示物:** ヒンドゥイズム、瞑想、ラーマクリシュナ、ヴィヴェーカーナンダに関する日・英両語による書籍が展示されます。  
**参加者に軽食をお出しします。**

※入場は無料です。

**Important notes**

1. Prior registration for admission is required. Hence please confirm your attendance by sending a mail to [vivekananda.event@gmail.com](mailto:vivekananda.event@gmail.com) by May 29, 2023. No confirmation mail will be sent.
  2. Precautions for using the hall:
    - Please avoid attending the programme if you have/had any symptoms of cough, fever in recent days.
    - Wearing a mask is mandatory.
    - Sterilizing hands at the entry point is also mandatory.
    - No food and drinks will be allowed inside the hall.
- \* Your cooperation is earnestly solicited. Thank you.

**ご来場に関するお願い**

1. ご参加いただくには事前登録が必要です。2023年5月29日までにEメール [vivekananda.event@gmail.com](mailto:vivekananda.event@gmail.com) にて、ご来場者の人数をご予約ください。確認メールは送信しません。
  2. ホールのご利用については以下の通りご協力をお願いいたします。
    - 過去数日以内を含め、発熱、せきの症状がある方はご来場をご遠慮ください。
    - マスクを必ず着用ください。
    - 会場の入口で手指の消毒を行ってください。
    - 会場内での飲食は禁止されています。
- \*皆様のご協力をお願いいたします。ありがとうございました。

**Map of The Embassy of India**



For further details, please call:  
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 Mr. S. Kar (045)264-4918  
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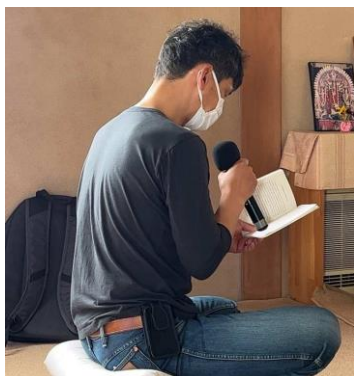
**インド大使館地図**



より詳しい情報を知りたい方は、  
 ここにお問い合わせ下さい：  
 スワミー・メーダサーナンダ  
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 249-0001 神奈川県逗子市久木  
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## Some Photographs from the Monthly Retreat in April



• Story to Remember •

## The Fanatical Worshipper of Shiva

There is an old story of a man who was a worshipper of Shiva.

There are sects in our country who worship God as Shiva, and others who worship Him as Vishnu.

This man was a great worshipper of Shiva, and to that he added a tremendous hatred for all worshippers of Vishnu, and would not hear the name of Vishnu pronounced.

There are a great number of worshippers of Vishnu in India, and he could not avoid hearing the name. So he bored two holes in his ears, and tied two little bells on to them, and whenever a man mentioned the name of Vishnu, he moved his head, and rang the bells and that prevented his hearing the noise.

But Shiva told him in a dream, “What a fool you are! I am Vishnu, and I am Shiva; they are not different, only in name; there are not two Gods”. But this man said, “I don’t care I will have nothing to do with this Vishnu business”.

He had a little statue of Shiva, and made it very nice, built an altar for it. One day he bought some beautiful incense and went home to light some of the incense for his God. While the fumes of his incense were rising in the air he found that the image was divided into two : one half remained Shiva, and the other half was Vishnu.

Then the man jumped up and put his finger under the nostril of Vishnu so that not a particle of the smell could get there. Then Shiva became disgusted, and the man became a demon. He is the father of all fanatics, the “bell-eared” demon. He is respected by the boys of India, and they worship him. It is a very peculiar kind of worship. They make a clay image, and worship him with all sorts of horrible smelling flowers. There are some flowers in the forests in India which have a most pestilential smell. They worship him with these, and then take big sticks and beat the image. He is the father of all fanatics, who hate all other gods except their own.

This is the only danger in this Nishta Bhakti, becoming this fanatical demon. The world gets full of them. It is very easy to hate; the generality of mankind get so weak that in order to love one they must hate another; they must take the energy out of one point in order to put it into another. A man loves one woman, and then loves another, and to love the other, he has to hate the first. So with women. This characteristic is in every part of our nature, and so in our religion.

The ordinary, undeveloped weak brain of mankind cannot love one without hating another. This very characteristic becomes fanaticism in religion. Loving their own ideal is synonymous with hating every other idea. This should be avoided.

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