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日本ヴェダント協会ニュースレター

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

Monthly Calendar



Birthdays

Swami Subodhananda
Monday, 7 November

Swami Vijnanananda
Wednesday, 9 November

Kyokai Events

• No October Zushi Retreat •

As Swami Medhasananda returns from India on 23 October, no Retreat is scheduled for October.

All, however are invited to attend the Kali Puja listed below.

• Kali Puja at Zushi •

October 26 19:00-21:30
Puja, Arati, Pushpanjali,
Homa, Prasad
All are welcome to attend.



✧ Thus Spake ✧

"In the Vedas and Upanishads, women taught the highest truths and received the same veneration as men."

... Swami Vivekananda

"The teacher who teaches true knowledge is more important than ten instructors. The father is more important than ten such teachers of true knowledge and the mother is more important than ten such fathers. There is no greater guru than mother."

... Mahabharata, Shantiparva, Chapter 30, sloka 9

July Zushi Retreat 2011

"Limitless Joy"

*A Talk by Dr. Tsuyoshi Nara, Professor Emeritus,
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies*

Today, I planned to arrive about 10:30 and following my calculations left home early enough to make it. However, since the train was delayed on the way I arrived at Zushi Station around 10:40. I am glad I could manage to arrive by eleven. This is a good example of the fact that things do not always go as we expect. The 2011 Tohoku Earthquake was not forecast by anyone and suddenly occurred. It triggered a devastating tsunami, which in turn caused the nuclear accidents at the Fukushima Power Plants. The Japanese government and other experts alike describe these events as "unexpected".

Planning a Future

We hope to live a long life, to be happy every day and be in good health, but no one knows what will happen tomorrow. It is surely important to plan for the future and work hard toward that plan, but the most impor-

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Limitless Joy (from page 1)

tant moment is “now”; the present you live in. Some people focus on their past, thinking they should have done this or that. Looking back at and learning from the past is significant in order to avoid the same mistakes, but you cannot change what has passed. You can only change things happening from now on. So, I think that the present and future are more important.

Only after birth can we realise that we were born into this world. What purposes do we live for then? Some people do not think of this at all, while others are confused after thinking too much. Anyway, honestly speaking, we want to have a happy, joyful time each day while we are alive. No one would prefer a painful, sad life. So we try to figure out how we can have an enjoyable life. In this modern life, we think like this: with a lot of money, we can live happily; but no, money is not enough, you need power too and hence have to work hard to be a politician, scholar or entrepreneur. Some want to be singers, actors or dancers for name and fame. It depends on the person, but we make efforts because we wish to live a happy life. People wishing to be religious leaders also carry out tough spiritual practice and study to seek the key to truth hoping for an enjoyable and mentally rich life. What, then, is truth? Truth is something that fills us with delight when we attain it. It is called satchidananda or infinite joy and however hard one's spiritual practice is we believe the goal is infinite joy once you attain truth. This motivates us to work hard towards the goal.

We Must Decide

Like the examples I just gave, everyone, monks or ordinary people, spend each day on thinking how

they can make their every day happier. Then, how can we attain joy or truth? Truth is being correct, but how should we tell if something is really right? In my opinion, we cannot. For instance, scientists study the universe or the atom to find the laws and theories behind them. Are they really right? The findings seemed correct when discovered, but later on someone else finds another law and the old law proves incorrect or incomplete. This is a good example of how difficult it is to demonstrate that something is right. We all believe that there should be what is always right for anyone, anywhere, anytime and pursuit it - its existence is actually uncertain though.

Now that you see and hear me, you reason that this is really happening. We might be dreaming, however. By no means can we prove whether this



is reality or a dream. It may, or may not be true. Even if we ask someone, we cannot tell whether they are right. All we can do is decide for ourselves. How? Do you feel a sense of joy in what you believe to be true? Or when you decide not to believe something - not from someone else but a decision YOU

have arrived at. Everyone has the ability to judge, or have instinctive gut feelings about issues. Learning from someone or reading books are important, but as long as we have no means to demonstrate something is right, we can only depend on whether we can have a joyful life with peace of mind when we believe in it, or when we do not. We can refer to someone's opinion, but finally we have to decide by reasoning or by gut feelings.

One can hear a variety of great discourses here and read wonderful books by Vivekananda, but are they all true? Of course, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda say they are true to them. It is we however, that decide whether or not we find

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Limitless Joy (from page 2)

them true for ourselves. It is up to us if we can have a happy life with a peaceful mind. We might say that if we keep learning we will be able to realise one day, which sounds like a bit of a lazy idea to me. Not “one day” but “right now” we should start making efforts to think. We may succeed or fail, but we just keep at it. This “keeping at it” is what life means.

Freedom and God

Swami Vivekananda said, “human beings feel happiest when they get freedom.” What is freedom? It means we can do whatever as we want, which must be very fun! We can get money, fame or good health if we want. We can even change the world. That is what freedom really means. Until we get it, we are anxious or dissatisfied. So, getting freedom is the most important thing for human beings. Real freedom is being able to do whatever as one wants, wherever and whenever. Who, then, has such unlimited freedom? I would say only God, the Almighty or the Spirit of the universe has it.

God can create or destroy the universe if He wishes. To Him, nothing is impossible. He has got complete freedom. How then can human beings get such complete freedom? Or can we not? Can we not become happy forever, if we do so? Firstly, we have to believe that we can. Life has no meaning if we do not think we can. Secondly, we need to be God, who has freedom. In other words, our target is being God. Then we can realise truth and feel infinite joy.

You learn every day by joining in discourses, etc. and the purpose of which is to attain freedom and becoming God. One usually supposes that becoming or being Him is not easy, and that only special people like Sri Ramakrishna can be Him. However, God has created human beings equally. I

believe that although they may look different and have different qualities, they are created with the same power as He has. So each and every one should know that and seek God. We presume that being God is difficult. Religions have different ways of practice each, like fasting and meditation, to get closer to being God, and describe that one can realise the state of God at one point. I have a different point of view: we do not need to “become” Gods, as we are already Gods by nature. The thing is, we just forget that we are God and we have to “remember” that fact instead of “becoming” Him. No one could be happier than someone who straightforwardly believes, “I am a child of God. I belong to God.” Just be open and decide on your own by asking yourself, then feel, “Yes, I belong to God.”

All Parts of a Larger Whole

God is infinite but our body is small. Some people say how you could say you are the same with Him. Some say He is infinite and has no form and some say He takes a form to appear. In fact, He is almighty and can hence either take a form or be formless. So it is nonsense to discuss that. Also each and every one of us is God. We should remember that whenever we see and feel anything. We feel pain if we are ill, have no money and power. However, what matters to us is life and being alive.

Who is supporting this important life? Generally speaking, God is, but more specifically, air. We could only live a few minutes without air. The heat of the sun is necessary too and provided for free by nature or God continuously and equally to all of us. He gives it to everyone without asking for anything in return, whether they are grateful or critical. This is the way God works and everything in nature works like that. If we are Gods, then we should treat everyone equally. We often feel that we like this person and dislike that person, but thinking that everyone is indispensable for this world we should see and treat them in the same way. When

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Limitless Joy (from page 3)

we can do so, we will really live like God.

In this world there are nearly seven billion people, only a tiny part of whom we can meet in life. But we should realise that thanks to those whom we never see or hear we can live. Japan's food self-sufficiency ratio is about 40% and the country imports the remaining 60%. We would never meet the people overseas who produce, transport and sell the food, but we can live by purchasing it. In other words, all those nearly seven billion people help make us live. We should be grateful to each and every one of them equally. At the same time, as long as we live, we each do something that helps ourselves and those whom we have never met. Seven billion people help us and we help them too- thinking that way leads us to God consciousness. So there is nothing useless in the world. We just need to remember that we are Gods and help others as well as to be thankful to them and live happily.

Communicating with All Things

That is the same about all things. The microphone I am using now, the building and air conditioner here are all things. Westerners are likely to see people differently from things, but oriental people, in particular the Japanese, see people and things in the same way. How does that happen? For instance, in Japan one observes Jichinsai, a ritual offering to the earth before building a house, to purify the site and offer prayers. Some go through the ritual of purifying a car when they purchase it. These are examples of how the Japanese tend to think that things have life as man does. Moreover, they even feel that they can communicate with animals, plants and things if they speak to them. Why?

This is odd, but if you use Japanese all the time since you were born your brain starts to think that way approximately by the age of nine. Some researchers studied the relation between the language and brain of the speaker around the world. They studied all languages and found that the people speaking Japanese or languages used in

Samoa, Tonga, Hawaii and other South Pacific islands have a bit different brains than those of the others. Human beings have left and right brains, each of which have different functions. Language is heard and understood in the left brain. Other sounds or noises, like of cars, machines, the rain, and songs of insects are usually processed by the right brain. However, Japanese speakers use the left brain to handle songs of insects and birds as well as language. No one can explain how that happens, but it is a fact.

What does this mean? The brains of Japanese speakers think that things have language and can communicate when spoken to, like human beings. It hence follows that everything existing in the world has life and can communicate via language. Gods have to be able to communicate with everything and everyone. By chance, speakers of Japanese and South Pacific languages have such brains even if they are not aware of it. Their

brains start to work that way at nine years of age. I do not mean Japanese people, but Japanese speakers. Japanese who have lived abroad as a child without using Japanese do not have such a brain, while the non-Japanese raised here in Japan do. DNAs do not matter. That is about the magical power of language. Having such an ability means that without intention we are communicating with

everything in a day-to-day life. So, if we speak from the bottom of our heart, we can communicate with everything, visible or invisible. We can automatically understand. That is the special quality of our language and tradition.

Believing in Prayer

Japan, the nation of those who have such a special language and tradition, was hit by a huge natural disaster. Collectively we try to figure out how we can recover and help the victims. For the fatalities, we will be comforting their souls, and for the survivors we will be providing food, equipment and housing, as well as speaking soothing words. That might be enough for normal disasters, but we now have the nuclear power

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Cheerful Farewells

Limitless Joy (from page 4)

plants issue. It was absolutely unexpected. They are working hard so they can contain contaminated water and air, but it will not be easy to solve. It is even unknown how many years it will take. The damage continues further, while we are struggling. At the moment they are trying to deal with it by every scientific means, which I do not think is enough. We as Japanese speakers will need to communicate with crippled machines and nuclear reactors. The European might laugh, but our brains are sure that we can definitely communicate. For one thing, we need to convey our gratitude. We have been consuming a huge amount of electricity they had been producing, for which we should thank them. For another, pray and ask them to recover, so no more contaminated water or air will spread. If God has infinite power, our prayers can definitely be heard. If those power stations are part of Him, they should respond and change to the most preferable status. That is the best part of what we as

Japanese speakers can do.

Praying to God means treating everything equally and praying for them equally. Believing in the power of prayer we should live each day grateful that others let us live and be proud that we let them live. We should do it right now, not one day, which I believe is important. This is what I want to say on the subject of "Limitless Joy" today. •

• Thought of the Month •

An ounce of mother
is worth a pound of clergy.

... Spanish Proverb

News in Brief for September and October 2011

Translated from Japanese for "The Vedanta Kyokai" by Ms. Satsuki Yokota

Indian Embassy Gita Studies

On Saturday September 3, thirty-five people attended the continuing study of "Bhagavad Gita" at the Embassy of India in Tokyo at 2 p.m.

Discourse in Tajimi



The following is a brief summary of the event by Ms Rie Ueno:

"On Sunday September 4, we at Compass Company organised a discourse by Swami Medhasananda in Tajimi, Gifu Prefecture. At 6:30 in the morning before the discourse started, the members of the staff met on a bank of the Toki River to offer

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Morning Meditation on the Banks of the Toki River in Tajimi

Discourse in Tajimi [from page 5]



Vedic mantras, study Bhagavad Gita and hear Maharaj talk as well as do 15 minutes' meditation. With our eyes closed, hearing the river running and regarding that sound as that of "aum", we were meditating. We experienced meditation in such a way for the first time, which was moving.

At the time of discourse Maharaj talked on "Positive Way of Life in Modern Society" between 9.30 and 12.00, which was easy for even newcomers to understand, peaceful and encouraging. Some of the audience were so fascinated that they asked if they could have their children in Tokyo attend a Zushi Retreat.

Here is the words Maharaj highlighted in the talk: "Do not run away, but face it." "All strength is within you." "Live well at this moment." •

Satsanga in Nagoya

On 4 September, Ms Akemi Hanya, representative of the Japan Yoga Therapy Society, organised a satsanga in Nagoya scheduled between 2 p.m. and 5.15 p.m., where Maharaj was invited to give a discourse on "Overcoming the Sorrows of the Great East Japan Earthquake". Thirty-six people attended.

The Society received a very thorough account of the discourse from Ms Hanya, the most pertinent points of which are very briefly summarized as follows:

"If you dwell on and discuss disasters at a personal level your mind will become negative. Taking a universal approach helps one to 'maintain a positive mind'. A positive mind-set means facing a problem to solve it, instead of running away from it. Whatever you try to escape only gets bigger. Being positive helps relieve pain and sorrow. Ninety percent of what you worry about never actually happens, but if you are negative your negative imagination makes your mind full of worries. If you are in a positive, you do not think about your past or future, but rather focus on "the

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moment” to live well. One can only control this moment. Once you become positive, you do not look to the near future or temporary results, but to the final or eternal results. Meditation is the best way to control negative thoughts.” •



Nagoya Seminar Q&A

• A Story to Remember •

The Broken Waterglass

Just after finishing dinner, with a quick swipe, the teacher intentionally knocked his glass of water onto the floor. Glass shattered everywhere, yet he remained calm. Meanwhile, his student, Raha, became noticeably upset. With similar upset, an employee begrudgingly began to clean up the water and broken glass. Almost everybody in the restaurant was upset, except for the teacher.

While attempting to hide her anger, Raha asked: “Why did you do that?” Her teacher replied, “What I do is far less important than what you do. Perhaps it might be more interesting to ask yourself why you feel the way you do right now.”

These words affected Raha so deeply that she was immediately moved to action. Raha helped the employee clean up the mess, and the more Raha helped, the less anger she felt. And the more the teacher watched, the more his eyes filled with tears.

After a few minutes, just as the table and floor had become clean, so had Raha’s heart. With immense gratitude, Raha bowed slightly to her teacher and then walked out the door. What remained was no longer just a teacher, but rather, also a student once again seeking Truth.

... Fr Eugene Lobo S.J.

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