



MAY 2010 - VOLUME 08 NUMBER 05



the Vedanta Kyokai

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

MONTHLY CALENDAR

• Birthdays •

Shankaracharya
Tuesday, 18 May

Sri Buddhadev
Thursday, 27 May

• Zushi Retreat

Sunday, 16 May 11 a.m.

Lord Buddha's Birth Celebration

"Practice of
Lord Buddha's Teachings"
Guest Speaker -
Reverend Kyoshun Kageyama,
Head Priest Syakazi Temple

ANNOUNCEMENT

GOLDEN JUBILEE

Closing Ceremony &
Swami Vivekananda
Public Birth Celebration

Date:
Sunday 30 May 2010
2:00 to 6:00pm

Venue:
Seisen University Auditorium

See page 10 in this issue



✧ Thus Spake ✧

"One must be patient like the earth. What iniquities are being perpetuated on her! Yet she quietly endures them all."

... Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi

"A jug fills drop by drop."

... Lord Buddha

April Zushi Retreat

"Assimilation in Spiritual Life"

A Talk by Swami Medhasananda

Assimilation is a very necessary and important factor for our spiritual life. What do we generally mean by assimilation? Any food and drink that we take must be digested so that they can help sustain our body and make it healthy and strong in such a way that we can do our work and also serve others. Assimilation of food and drink means that the essence of that food and drink becomes part of our body. Even with a large intake of healthy food, if we cannot assimilate it, our body becomes weak and subject to diseases.

Similarly there are many ethical and spiritual truths, messages and values, but unless we can assimilate them, we cannot get any benefit. We may read or hear about many spiritual values, but unless we assimilate them, we cannot become moral and spiritual, we cannot become pure, peaceful, joyful and strong. Let me now give some examples of ethical and spiritual values:

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Assimilation [from page 1]

- Speak the truth.
- Do not be greedy.
- Anger and lust are our worst enemies and we must control them.
- One should be pure in body, speech and mind.
- We should love others as we love ourselves.
- The goal of human life is the realization of the Self.
- I am Atman, pure consciousness.
- I am an instrument of God and a devotee of God.

Now, even if we read hundreds of these spiritual and ethical values, hear many religious ideas; even if we read many books and or listen to spiritual discourses by spiritual teachers and visit many religious groups or temples; or can even discuss spiritual subjects for hours; if we do not assimilate all that and such teachings do not become part of our life, we do not get any benefit from them. So if we really want to change and transform our life, if we want to become spiritual, we must assimilate those spiritual and ethical values.

What is the proof of the assimilation of ethical and spiritual values? What is the proof that they have become part of our life? The proof is that these teachings will manifest through our body, our actions, in our mind, in our speech, and in a natural way. Take for example this famous spiritual teaching by Jesus: "Love thy neighbor as thyself", which is a teaching all great religious teachers affirm. If this teaching becomes part of our life what shall we see? We shall see that our body will not hurt anybody, rather with our body we shall serve others. Our speech will not hurt anyone, and we shall not speak ill of others and shall mention only the good qualities of others. We shall talk sweet words. And all this we will do in a natural way. Our mind will not think ill of others, will not feel jealousy or hatred, will not find faults; our mind will be full of love and compassion for others. We shall always think of how to serve others. When this becomes our condition, then we can know that we have assimilated this idea of "Love thy neighbor as thyself".

After so many years, after becoming a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, when I look back at my own life I see how difficult it is to really assimilate these types of spiritual values. It is interesting to see in the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna how M., the recorder of the Gospel, sometimes commented on Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual instructions by saying: "I know that". In such cases Sri Ramakrishna retorted: "It is not enough to know that, try to understand it deeply and assimilate it."

This is what we always do; we read spiritual truths from the scriptures, the Bhagavad Gita, the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, the Bible, the teachings of Buddha and whenever we happen to hear again such spiritual truths we react by saying: "I know that." This type of "knowing" is very superficial; it has not become a realization, it has not become a part of our life, it has not been, in fact, assimilated. For that to happen one needs serious, continuous practice, what in Sanskrit is called 'sadhana'.

What are the steps that lead to assimilation, which cannot be achieved all of a sudden? First of all we should gather these spiritual and ethical values; the next step is understanding them; the third step is choosing; then focusing; the next is practicing and struggling comes next. Then, finally, assimilation comes. Let me elaborate about these steps.

Gathering: this is the rather easy process of reading books or hearing discourses.

Understanding: by reading or listening only our understanding is usually rather shallow; by reading with a qualified teacher or thinking very seriously our understanding becomes deeper. Sometimes discussing with other spiritual aspirants also helps.

Choosing: this is selecting what is good and possible for us. Take Pranayama for example. It can sometimes give good and quick results, but at the same time there is danger. If it is not practiced in the right way and integrated with the correct intake of food, rest, etc. it may negatively affect our mind and body. Also, there are many methods of meditation. What is the best one for us? So we have to choose. Again, a spiritual teacher can help us choose a particular method and spiritual practice fit for us.

Focusing: this is very important, without focusing there cannot be a deep understanding. We have first to select some specific spiritual truths to focus on. There is the following example in the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. There is the popular belief that when the Svâti Star is in the ascendant and drops of rain fall into the mouth of waiting oysters, then the oysters dive deep into the ocean and from those rain drops pearls are made. During that process the oysters only focus on how to make pearls out of the rain drops.

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Assimilation [from page 2]

There are two concepts: “God, I belong to you” and “I am God”. Swami Turiyanandaji, a great monastic disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, mentioned that for some days he had tried to focus on the idea that he was an agent, an instrument of God. He narrated that during that period he tried continuously to see if he really was able to remember that he was an instrument of God at every step, at every moment. If he walked he used to ask himself if he was really the one walking or if he was walking by the power of God alone. If he talked he wondered if he was talking by his power or by God’s power. Similarly he applied the same question to other activities such as breathing, blinking, eating, digesting, etc. This is a clear example on how to focus on an idea.

In the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna there is the story of a devotee of Rama that, unable to sleep after dinner, sat in the verandah chanting the name of Rama. Some robbers then came and forced him to help carry some stolen items for them. Soon the police arrived and the robbers escaped, but the poor devotee was arrested, placed in a cell and the next day was submitted to court for charges. The judge asked him what had happened. This is what the devotee told the judge: “By the will of Rama I was sitting on my verandah after dinner; by the will of Rama some robbers came; by the will of Rama they forced me to carry their loot; by the will of Rama the police came and arrested me; by the will of Rama I was placed in a cell; and by the will of Rama I am now facing judgment”. Some of the fellow villagers of the devotee were present at court and explained to the judge that the devotee was a very pious person and would never commit a crime. The judge understood the whole situation and set the devotee free. The devotee then commented: “By the will of Rama Your Honor has now set me free”. This is another example of focusing on the concept that one is just an instrument of God’s will. We all have read this famous story in the Gospel; the important thing is to relate it to our own day-to-day life.

Another example: we recently had an exhibition at the India Embassy during the recent Sakura Hanami (cherry blossom viewing). Now let us try to relate the above message to that exhibition. Outwardly Swami Medhasananda had the idea to participate in exhibitions at Namaste India and in this recent Hanami so that many passersby, who know nothing of this Society, could be given the opportunity to visit these exhibitions, have a good time and learn about Sri Ra-

makrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Swami Medhasananda placed these ideas before the committee of the devotees and the committee approved of these initiatives. Then some devotees started collecting materials from different sources in preparation for the exhibitions. Then there was the printing of the programs and also many different preparations. Finally, in the case of the exhibition at the Indian Embassy, nice decorations were placed at the exhibition site. Many people came and saw the exhibited materials. Most were quite impressed, although some did find some mistaken dates in our descriptions.

Now let us try to relate all that to the “will of Rama”. First Sri Ramakrishna sent these ideas to Swami Medhasananda. Then Sri Ramakrishna prompted the consent of devotees’ committee. Then materials were collected for the exhibitions by Sri Ramakrishna through the devotees. Then all arrangements were made by Sri Ramakrishna through His devotees. Then Sri Ramakrishna witnessed these exhibits through the eyes of the visitors and through some visitors He expressed His approval and even found some mistakes. If we look at this on an even higher level, we may say that Sri Ramakrishna did not do all that ‘through’ the devotees, but He, himself, did what He is. Meaning that Sri Ramakrishna, Himself, was the idea, the devotees, the exhibitions and the visitors. This is Ramakrishna Consciousness. This is Advaita according to the bhakti.

What is the greatest effect of this? If we think of the devotee of Rama we mentioned before in the story, we will notice that this devotee never lost his peace of mind throughout his ordeal. He was always serene and never worried. He maintained that same serene attitude even when he was set free. This is remarkable: if we really believe that we are only the instruments of God, that everything happens by the will of God, and, finally, that everything and everyone is God, only then can we maintain constant peace of mind. This means being connected to God. How to be connected to God is the biggest challenge in spiritual life. If we can relate these spiritual teachings to our every-day life, and assimilate them, we can then be connected to God. This is focusing.

Struggling is an important and necessary step. So many times we fail; so many negative samskaras appear and many secular ideas come. Perseverance and patience is important, as well as a regulated life to maintain us as we remain focused on our chosen spiritual truths during the struggle. Unless our life is

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Assimilation [from page 3]

regulated and we try to practice purity in body, mind and speech, we do not get enough vigor to focus on our spiritual life. Chaitanya Deva was a great sage of Medieval India and was also regarded as a God Incarnation. Someone asked him how many of the aspirants, to whom he gave many spiritual instructions, did not see much improvements in their spiritual life. Chaitanya Deva answered that such aspirants were not able to assimilate his teachings because they were not leading a pure life. Sexual purity is an important factor and we also have to enhance our will power. If we can do all that, practicing continuously, we can definitely assimilate whatever spiritual truth we are studying.

In conclusion we can say that there are only two alternatives: the choice is ours. We give up the struggle and remain the same secular individuals and not attain to any real peace and joy. The other alternative is to accept this struggle as a challenge, the greatest

challenge of life. And to the extent we can succeed, to that extent we can get real peace and joy; to that extent our life will be blessed and fulfilled. It is not necessary to read and hear a lot about spiritual truths, it is necessary and most important to focus at least on some spiritual truths and assimilate them, make them a part of our life and be benefited from that choice. •

• Thought of the Month •

*"Love cannot remain by itself,
it has no meaning.
Love has to be put into action,
and that action is service."*

... Mother Teresa

A Vedanta Society of Japan Golden Jubilee Event The Indo-Japan Relationship Exhibition at the Indian Embassy

The Vedanta Society of Japan held an expanded Indo-Japan Relationship Exhibition, co-organized by the Society and the Indian Embassy in Tokyo, from April 7 to 11 in the Embassy's ICC Gallery and adjoining Multifunction Room. This exhibit was the fifth event of the Society's Golden Jubilee year of special programmes to broaden its exposure and impact on the Japanese general public. The Society's official Golden Jubilee Year is from June 2009 to May 2010, with the closing event scheduled for 30 May 2010 at Seisen University Auditorium.

The floor of the exhibit had been organised so that visitors could follow an intended historical theme of the exhibition beginning with the earliest of Indian and Japanese religious and cultural exchanges. After 3 PM on the opening day, the Indian Ambassador, His Excellency Hemant Krishan Singh, and Mr. Sanjay Bhattacharya, Deputy Chief of the Mission joined the awaiting visitors and Society volunteers in an official opening ceremony including a lamplighting and brief welcomings from Ambassador Singh and Swami Medhasananda.



The exhibition itself consisted of the following sections: 1) An small altar with a beautifully hand-crafted image of Sri Ramakrishna and large mounted photos of Swami Vivekananda and Okakura Tenshin - two pioneers of the India-Japan relationship expanded further in another section of photos of the places and personalities of those times; 2) Panels on the India-

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Indo-Japan Exhibit [from page 4]

Japan Relationship to include the spread of Buddhism and early Japanese adherents and cultural artifacts; 3) Several panels on the Life and Message of Swami Vivekananda; 4) Panels on Ramakrishna Mission, including headquarters, educational, cultural, publication centres, tribal and rural activities, relief operations etc.; 5) Panels on Vedanta Society of Japan; 6) Statistics related to the India-Japan Relationship including cultural and business activities; 7) A book display in Japanese on India-Japan Relationship; 8) and a display of a few original letters and documents.

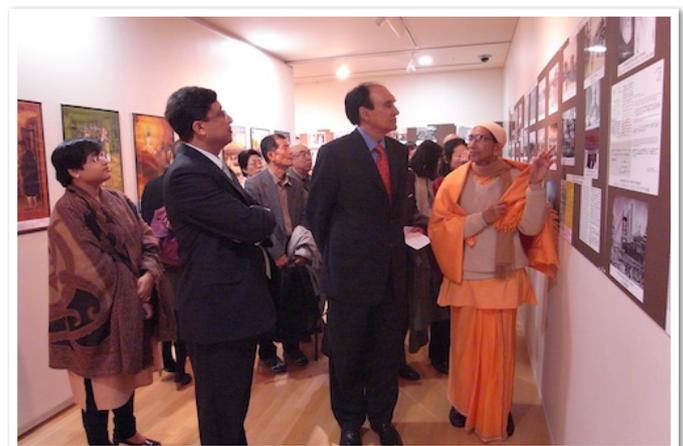
The adjoining Multifunction Room featured a video corner showing videos on Life of Swami Vivekananda; 100 years of Relief Services undertaken by the Ramakrishna Mission; Vedanta Society of Japan facilities and activities; and a digest of various phases of the Society's yearlong Golden Jubilee Celebration. Also on



display here were Japanese-language books published by the Society for browsing and placing orders. Visitors were asked to submit comments and complete a questionnaire and given a gift of books at the final station before exiting.

According to our estimate there were about 2500 visitors to the exhibition which coincided with the brief and vibrant display of sakura blossoms this year in front of the Embassy along a treelined moat in the immediate vicinity; a very popular blossom viewing thoroughfare. Most of the visitors to the exhibition were profoundly interested and were particularly impressed with the panels on the India - Japan Relationship and the wonderful life and message of Swami Vivekananda.

It is noteworthy that with few exceptions these visitors had little knowledge of India-Japan Relationship and almost no knowledge about Swamiji beforehand. •



Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre of the Philippines in Manila “Who Am I?”

A Talk by Swami Medhasananda on Sunday March 14, 2010

You may wonder why discuss the topic of “Who am I?”. You may say that you know very well who you are. Nowadays all details and information about a particular person applying for a job are contained in a document called “curriculum vitae”, which summarizes the person’s name, age, weight, height, education, work experience, etc. Is this enough to define who that particular person is?

Here is an interesting story: A lady, critically ill, was confined in hospital comatose. In her coma she had a sort of vision. She had gone to Heaven and was asked by an angel, “Who are you?” “I am Elisa” she answered. But the angel said, “I did not ask your name, I asked who you are.” So she said, “I am the wife of John and the mother of two children.” “I did not ask whose wife you were and how many children you had, I am asking who you are,” the angel said. Elisa, a bit confused, then said, “I am a school teacher.” The angel however retorted, “I am not asking of your profession, I asked who you are!” So Elisa thought that the angel might be asking of her religion and said, “I am a Christian.” “I did not ask to which religion you belong,” said the angel, “I am asking a simple question; Who are you?” “Maybe, Elisa thought, the angel is asking my nationality and said, ‘I am Filipino!’” But the angel answered, “No, I am not asking your nationality, I am asking who you are!”

Elisa at this point was utterly confused and became thoughtful, “If I cannot identify myself with my name, family position, profession, religion or nationality,” she thought, “then what is the appropriate answer to this question?” Since it had come from an angel, she thought that it could not be an ordinary question, but it must have some deeper meaning. So she thought she should think seriously about the question and find the correct answer.

As you probably know, Sri Ramakrishna worshipped an image of Mother Kali, the Divine Mother, a statue of rather small dimensions given the enormity of what She represents. He was once asked how such a small image could have created the universe, which is so vast. Sri Ramakrishna retorted, “Look at the sun, which is so much bigger than our small planet, but looks so small, almost like a dish in the sky. Although the sun is much bigger than the Earth it looks very small because of the

distance, because our planet is so far away from it.” This is a very fitting explanation, in fact the nearer we go to the sun the more we understand how large it is.

Similarly, the image of Mother Kali, or other Deities, looks so small and finite, but the nearer you go to them, by understanding them, you realize that they are infinite. An Indian writer made a wonderful comment about human beings, he said, “To stand before a man is to stand before an ocean.” The ocean is so vast and deep and seems almost infinite. A man looks so small, but there is infinity in him; we are all carrying infinity within us, we are actually infinite. In fact, we suffer because we forget we are infinite and we think of ourselves in a small, narrow way.

How can we become aware of the infinity which is within us; about our real infinite nature of Sat –Chit-Ananda that is, existence, knowledge and bliss absolute? Besides, we search for joy outside ourselves, while the real source of joy is within, we misdirect our search.

Why do we fear death? It is because we are not aware that our real nature is eternal. We identify ourselves with our body, and surely the body experiences a birth and a death. This, of course, causes fear and suffering. It is therefore necessary to find our real nature. It is a pity that we make others or other things the object of our research, but we never make ourselves the object of research.

The Upanishads and Vedanta start with the question ‘Who am I?’ The first instruction of the Upanishads is ‘Know thyself’ and the whole of the Upanishads discusses and answers this point. The gist of the Upanishads is about the real nature of the Self and how to go about realizing one’s real nature.

Knowledge about the external world is partial, external knowledge; knowledge only becomes complete when it includes internal knowledge about ourselves.

To find out about our real nature it is first of all necessary to understand the difference between the apparent and the real. Sometimes the apparent and the real are the same, but often they are not. Take the sky for

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Who Am I? [from page 6]

example, or sea water; they appear blue, but, in fact, they have no color; they are transparent. Accordingly there is a difference between the apparent self and the real self.

The next step is analysis about ourselves. Here the subject of research and the object of research are the same. This is the difference of methodology between external research and internal research. There are different levels in one's personality; a physical level, one's level of energy, senses, mind, intelligence, ego. Are all these working according to their own whims or is there some sort of coordinator?

A coordinator is necessary in order to avoid confusion, to avoid making one's life troublesome. Who is the coordinator? Is there a substratum; something deeper, below these different levels of personality?

There is a sense of I-ness throughout our childhood, youth and old age. This notion of I-ness is always there irrespective of our physical or mental changes. What is this sense of I-ness? Let us try to analyze: Am I the body? In such a case the sense of I-ness in a child must be different from that of an adult or even elderly person, since the body changes with one's age. So you are not the body as your sense of I-ness does not change with your age.

Similarly, you are not energy itself since you may sometimes feel strong and sometimes weak, but your notion of I-ness remains the same. And you are not the senses; although temporarily you may identify yourselves with the senses. It is actually the sense organs that see, hear, touch, etc. Even if you should, for example, lose your hearing, your feeling of I-ness would not change.

Again, you may temporarily identify yourselves with your mind. It is in fact the mind that makes you feel happy when you receive praise and makes you feel sad if someone abuses you. So are you the mind? No, because your sense of I-ness is still the same regardless of whether you feel happy or sad or afraid and so on. Are you then the ego? In deep sleep your ego sense stops working. But when you wake up you feel that same sense of I-ness you had when going to bed. So you are not the ego.

The same I-ness feeling is always there; so what is it that gives us the same sense of I-ness? What is its source? The Upanishads say that your real nature is the soul, the spirit, the Atman; and it is the substratum of

our personality which causes us to have the feeling of a continuing I-ness. Atman is the coordinator of our different levels of personality; it is the only real consciousness.

The different personality levels which are there in each of us borrow a partial, limited consciousness from Atman and, in fact, according to this Indian philosophy, these different levels of personality are matter, gross, like the body, or progressively more subtle like mind, intelligence, ego, etc. An easy example is the moon. It does not produce any light of its own; it borrows its light from the sun and reflects it.

What then is the nature of the Atman? In the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita the nature of Atman is discussed at length. Atman is without form, we cannot touch Him, He is birthless, deathless, eternal, He is absolute knowledge, absolute existence and absolute joy. Why do we say that? Our experience of knowledge, existence and joy is relative, short lived, conditioned by time and space and limited.

On the contrary, experience of the Atman is absolute, is not temporary, but eternal, and not conditioned by time and space and is without limits. For example, think of what Newton, the great scientist, said: "I am collecting only a few pebbles from the ocean of knowledge." This helps us understand the difference between limited knowledge and absolute knowledge. The Upanishads also give us this beautiful statement: "One who knows the Atman is omniscient, knows everything."

An important consequence of this point is that our concept of ourselves shapes our idea of others too, and if we look upon ourselves as the body, inevitably we shall look upon others as the body as well. This will lead to all sorts of problems and a lack of harmony, since bodies are always different. On the other hand if we see ourselves as Atman, we shall then regard others as Atman as well. This makes a huge difference since the Atman is the same in everybody and we shall then be able to establish harmony through the Atman.

So now we can understand intellectually that our real nature is Atman, but the next important question is how to get established in that; and this is the whole challenge. The path there is to first of all to listen to this truth; we are very fortunate if we have the possibility to hear this truth. The Upanishads say that there are millions and millions of people who have no chance to hear that our real nature is eternal, infinite, that it is Atman. But, among those who have heard this truth,

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Who Am I? [from page 7]

rare are the ones who try to realize it and even rarer are those who realize it. So the first step is hearing, reading, studying. The second step is reasoning and becoming intellectually convinced, and the third step is focusing on that truth and identifying ourselves with our real nature, not with the body. This is the real struggle.

We should be aware at every moment of what our real nature is, without identifying ourselves with the different levels of our personality such as mind, body, etc. There are different ways to do this; the way of devotion (Bhakti), the way of selfless work (Karma), the way of meditation (Raja) and the way of discrimination (Jnana). This latter way, the way of discrimination, is seemingly very simple as it only requires awareness of our real nature, without any other spiritual practice. But if one tries to follow this way and be aware at all times of one's real nature, one realizes how difficult it is. Inevitably one has the tendency to forget about one's real nature and to identify oneself with the body, mind, senses, intelligence, ego, etc.

Bhakti, the path of devotion, is the easier way. Bhakti has two aspects: ritualism, and the philosophical aspect of devotion, where you do not worship any particular image or deity: you see the same presence of God, or of God's incarnation, in yourself, in everyone and in everything. Behind each divine personality or manifestation of God there are always two aspects: one is the form aspect and the other is the spiritual aspect. Accordingly we think of the form of Sri Ramakrishna, Buddha, Krishna, Jesus, etc., but there is also their spiritual aspect, the consciousness aspect. When you have Christ consciousness, Ramakrishna consciousness, Krishna consciousness, etc, you see the same Christ, Ramakrishna or Krishna in everything and everyone, including yourself.

In practice one should first focus on the form aspect of one's chosen deity. Later one transcends that aspect and goes to the substratum of that aspect which is formless, which is spirit. By connecting yourself with that Christ, Ramakrishna, Krishna consciousness, you finally realize your chosen deity.

The same consciousness at the macro level is called God, or the Supreme Reality, or Brahman; but this same consciousness at the micro level is called Atman, or spirit, or soul. Either by focusing on God, or by focusing on yourself, you will finally realize your real nature; you will truly understand who you are.

What is the obstacle that hides our real nature from us? The Upanishads say Maya, or spiritual ignorance. Maya acts in two ways; first it hides the real nature of a particular entity and then it shows a distorted, different image of this entity. Maya covers our real nature (I am Atman) and projects the wrong image of ourselves (I am the body, I am the mind, I am the ego, etc.). That is how Maya works.

How can we solve this problem? How to eliminate spiritual ignorance; Maya? Introspection, self analysis and purification of mind are necessary. We have to maintain awareness of our real nature. Focusing on the truth, we have to discriminate between what is real and unreal, permanent and temporary, and finally we have to control our mind and senses, we have to lead a controlled life.

Swami Vivekananda gave this beautiful definition of religion: "Religion is the manifestation of the divinity which is already in man." We can achieve it by following the way of Bhakti, or Karma, or Raja, or Jnana, or a combination of these ways. Why does the husband love his wife? Why do the parents love their children? The Upanishads say that the same Atman is in the husband, wife and children, that is why they love one another. Why does no one want to die? Because our real nature is eternal. Why does man, right from childhood, seek to know more and more? Because our real nature is knowledge. Why do we seek joy? Because our real nature is joy. Our natural urges to live, know and have joy are there as our real nature is existence, knowledge and joy.

We often misdirect such urges, however, so we need to re-direct our search in the correct way, discriminating between real and unreal and keeping awareness of our real nature. The effect will be that we become free from anxiety, fear, sadness, and a sense of relief will be there instead. The more we identify ourselves with our real nature, the more we feel real joy, peace, wisdom, controlling our minds and managing our desires. Another path to achieve real joy, peace and wisdom is to depend completely on God, but this is not an easy path.

In either way we learn to know ourselves, we realize who we are, we achieve Mukti, liberation, or the Christian Kingdom of God. Finally, the Upanishads answer the question, "Who are you?" with "Thou are That; the Supreme Reality, Atman." When we realize that, and are established in that, the purpose of our life is fulfilled. •

Former Secretary Masanobu Osonoi Remembered

On April 18, a brief memorial service was observed by the congregation of the Vedanta Society of Japan at the start of their April Monthly Retreat to honor the Society's long-serving secretary, Mr. Masanobu Osonoi. Osonoi-san expired suddenly at his home on Friday, March 12, less than one year after passing the torch of service onto his successor, Mr. Yutaka Miyake. Most regrettably, the Society had not been informed of his passing until much later that month.

Noting the framed photo of Mr. Osonoi at the foot of the shrine for those that perhaps had not had the opportunity to meet him, Swami Medhasananda recounted for the congregation that Osonoi-san's service to the Society had spanned over 40 years. He was one of the earliest members of the Society and would eventually become its Secretary. "He served in this capacity for twenty-four years with great efficiency and love", continued the swami, "retiring only last June."

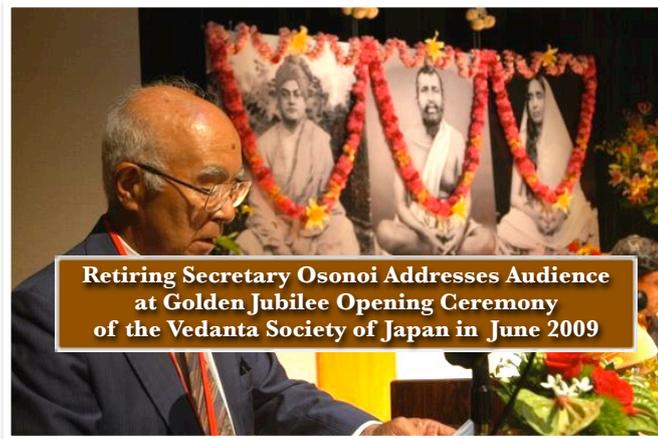
The swami then called upon three in attendance to offer words of remembrance and homage to Osonoi-san from their particular relationship to him.

The new Secretary, Mr. Yutaka Miyake, echoed his shock at the sudden loss of Osonoi-san, noting that during recent phone conversations regarding particulars of Secretarial duties he had sounded so fit. He said Osonoi-san was always cheerful and ready to assist and regretted that there was still much he would like to have been able to consult with him about. In conclusion he said that since Osonoi-san had been with the Society so long and that the Society was celebrating its 50th year of service in Japan, that it was particularly sad that Osonoi-san wouldn't be attending

the closing ceremony of the Golden Jubilee Celebration on May 22nd.

Ms. Yohko Satoh then told of her long acquaintance with Osonoi-san through founding member Ms. Haru Nakai and of her introduction to Vedanta through her. She said that during her early association with him they discovered that they lived not too far from each other. She recalled that once during the time he was caring for his mother he had pushed her over to Satoh's house in a wheelchair. There they had enjoyed afternoon tea and conversation.

She noted that although Osonoi-san's wife is a staunch Christian and she recalled that he had praised his wife's commitment and had commented about learning something from her church group regarding regular church attendance and the spirit of volunteerism. Mostly Satoh-san remembered Osonoi-san as a calm and quiet person, one who was humble like the air, so essential, and yet so easily overlooked.



Retiring Secretary Osonoi Addresses Audience at Golden Jubilee Opening Ceremony of the Vedanta Society of Japan in June 2009

Ms. Hiraishi remembered Osonoi-san also traveled to India on her first visit there some years back and was also a member of the Japanese group on three of her visits to India. She remembered Osonoi-san being full of vigor and that he quite enjoyed Indian sweets, while she doesn't relish sweets at all. Dinners at the Belur Guest House also included many prasad sweets which she would offer to Osonoi-san who always gratefully accepted. She also remembered that Osonoi-san would usually drive to the Monthly Retreat and always offer her a ride to the station afterward. During sakura season he would take a slightly longer route so that she could enjoy the blossoms. "He was that kind

[cont page 11]

日本ヴェーダ学会創立 50 周年記念行事閉会式ならびに
 スワミー・ヴィヴェーカーナンダ第 148 回生誕記念日祝賀会へのお誘い
**Hearty Welcome to Golden Jubilee Celebration Closing Ceremony
 and Swami Vivekananda's 148th Birthday Celebration**

主催：日本ヴェーダ学会 共催：清泉女子大学地球市民学科
 Organizer- Vedanta Society of Japan : Co-organizer- Department of Global Citizenship Studies, Seisen University
 Website (Eng.): <http://en.vedanta.jp/goldenjubilee> or (Japa.)<http://ja.vedanta.jp/50> E-mail: goldenjubileenvk@gmail.com

後援： 在日インド大使館・インド文化関係評議会
 日時： 2010年5月30日(日) 午後2時より6時まで
 場所： 東京都品川区東五反田3-16-21 清泉女子大学、講堂
 ゲスト・スピーカー： スワミー・スマラーナンダ師
 (ラーマクリシュナ・マト及びミッション副僧院長)
 H・K・シン
 (駐日インド大使閣下)
 ベトロ岡田武夫
 (カトリック東京教区大司教)
 佐藤良純
 (大正大学名誉教授)
 山口泰司
 (明治大学教授)

テーマ： 「調和と平和」
 文化行事： インドよりの来日される、もっとも著名なサントウル奏者
 パンディット・シヴクマル・シャーマ氏によるインド楽器演奏と、インド
 の著名なカラクリシュナ氏と彼のグループによるインド舞踊シヴァタン
 ダヴァ。

展示会： 12時より開催
 テーマ： 日印交流の歴史ならびにスワミー・ヴィヴェーカーナンダ
 の生涯とメッセージ

入場料：無料。 なお、すべての来場者に記念図書と軽食を進呈。

主催者：近代インドの著名な預言者スワミー・ヴィヴェーカーナンダ師
 (1863-1902) によって創設されたラーマクリシュナ・ミッションは、イン
 ドに本部 (<http://www.belurmath.org>) があり、その日本支部が「日本ヴェ
 ーダ学会」です。なお、当学会は、創立以来日本社会への奉仕をしなが
 ら今年で丁度創立 50 周年を迎えますが、それを記念し 2009 年 6 月より 1
 年間様々なプログラムや祝賀行事を催してまいりました。

祝賀の目的：当協会がこうした様々な祝賀行事を催してきた目的は、ヴェ
 ーダ哲学や聖ラーマクリシュナとヴィヴェーカーナンダ師の言葉を日本
 の人々に伝え、強い精神力と知恵と平和な心を人々の日常生活にもたらすこ
 とにあります。皆様もこの尊い使命に参加し、私達の目指す目的達成に力を
 貸してくださいませよう、心よりお願い申し上げます。

祝賀行事に関しては、当協会のホームページ <http://ja.vedanta.jp/50> をご
 参照下さい。

事務所：日本ヴェーダ学会
 〒249-0001 神奈川県逗子市久木 4-18-1
 電話 046-873-0428, Fax 046-873-0592

地図 Tel. 03-3447-5551 (清泉女子大学代表電話)



※式典当日は 1 時 45 分までに会場へお越し下さい。また会場の座
 席を確実にするため、2010 年 5 月 25 日までに
gjc.nvk@gmail.com 宛てに御予約のメールをお送り下さい。

Sponsor: Indian Embassy, Tokyo
 Indian Council for Cultural Relations, India
 Seisen University Auditorium
 Date and Time: Sunday, 30th May, 2010 (2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.)
 Venue: 3-16-21 Higashi-gotanda, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo
 Guest speakers: Revered Swami Smaranandaji,
 Vice - President, Ramakrishna Math and Mission
 H. H. Sri H. K. Singh,
 Ambassador of India
 Reverend Peter Okada Takeo,
 The Archbishop of Tokyo
 Reverend Ryojun Sato,
 Emeritus Professor, Taisho University
 Dr. Yasuji Yamaguchi,
 Professor, Meiji University
 Theme: 'Harmony and Peace'

Cultural programme: Indian instrumental music Santoor by
 Pandit Shivkumar Sharma, the most eminent santoor player of India;
 Indian dance Shivatandava by Mr. Kalakrishna and his troupe, a
 famous dance group from India

Exhibition: Opens at 12:00 noon
 Theme: India - Japan Relationship and
 Swami Vivekananda's Life & Message

Admission: Free and all attendees will be presented with books and
 treated with light refreshment.

Organizer - Vedanta Society of Japan (Nippon Vedanta Kyokai), a
 branch of the Ramakrishna Mission with Headquarters (<http://www.belurmath.org>) in India and many branches around the world,
 which was founded by Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), the
 celebrated prophet. The Society has been celebrating Golden Jubilee
 on completion of fifty years of its service in this country with various
 programs and projects for one year since June, 2009.

Purpose of the Celebration: Apart from celebrating 50 years of service
 in Japan the main objective of the celebration events is to propagate
 the elevating message of Vedanta and Ramakrishna - Vivekananda in
 this country for bringing mental and spiritual strength, wisdom and
 peace to the lives of the people. We earnestly appeal to you to become
 a part of this noble mission and help us to achieve the goal.

For details of the background of the celebration and its programs
 and projects please visit <http://en.vedanta.jp/goldenjubilee>

Office address: Nippon Vedanta Kyokai
 4-18-1 Hisagi Zushi-shi, Kanagawa-ken, 〒249-0001
 Phone (046)873-0428 Fax (046)873-0592

MAP : VENUE Phone: 03-3447-5551



※ Please take your seat by 1-45p.m.
 ※ Please reserve your seat by sending e-mail to
gjc.nvk@gmail.com or Fax: 046-873-0592 by May 25th, 2010

Osonoi-san [from page 9]

of a gentle person," she said as she briefly lost composure, initiating tears throughout the room. "Like Satoh-san just said, he was like the air we breathe and he'll be sorely missed."

Swami added that Osonoi-san had, in fact, offered his life to the service of Sri Ramakrishna. "Coming to Japan I had no knowledge of Japan or the Japanese or of the any customs that one should follow," he said. "Osonoi-san guided me at every step in those early days and I remain so grateful to him." He went on to say that he had had the opportunity to observe many of Osonoi-san's character traits. One of these was that no matter the personal inconvenience, he would always come to the Centre when requested. Another is that he would also always exude serenity and mental calmness and

never express any agitation regardless of the stresses of the tasks at hand. "Without some real spiritual development, it is difficult to maintain such serenity," he continued. "This is, in fact, a lesson we can imbibe from Osonoi-san's life." When there were free moments at the Centre or when Osonoi-san would be driving them somewhere, there were times for light conversation. One example was a discussion of an aged couple and whether it is better for the husband or the wife to die first.

Another time the swami had asked whether he had any wish to be with Sri Ramakrishna after death (Ramakrishna Loka). "His answer was significant," said Swami, "because monks often pray that they be allowed to reside with Sri Ramakrishna after their mortal works are completed. He answered me saying, 'Oh Swami, I don't think of those things - I only think of Sri Ramakrishna.' " •

• A Story to Remember •

The Fragrance of the Rose

The disciples were absorbed in a discussion of Lao-tzu's dictum:

"Those who know, do not say;
Those who say, do not know."

When the master entered, they asked him what the words meant.

Said the master, "Which of you knows the fragrance of a rose?"

All of them indicated that they knew. Then he said, "Put it into words."

All of them were silent.

from One Minute Wisdom by Anthony DeMello

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