



June / July 2010 - Volume 08 Number 06

日本ヴェーダーンタ協会ニュースレター

The Vedanta Kyokai

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

Monthly Calendar



50th Closing Ceremony Invocation

Birthdays

There are no birthday celebrations for the months of June and July.

Events

- **JUNE ZUSHI RETREAT** •
Special Event & Date: 2nd June
Swami Smarananandaji
Vice President Ramakrishna Mission
- **JULY ZUSHI RETREAT** •
Sunday July 18, 11 a.m.
Avatar, Incarnation of God
All are welcome to attend.
- **50th JUBILEE** •
“Get Together & Thank You”
A special meeting of Committees,
Sub-committees and Volunteers
Zushi Centre, Saturday, 24 July, 3pm.
- **OUTDOOR SUMMER RETREAT** •
July 30 - August 1 @ Mount Mitake
RESERVATIONS REQUIRED
by July 17. Contact the Kyokai or
<shanti.k@r3.dion.ne.jp>



✧ Thus Spake ✧

“You have to grow from the inside out. None can teach you, none can make you spiritual. There is no other teacher but your own soul.”
... Swami Vivekananda

“The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”
... Jesus the Christ

Golden Jubilee Closing Ceremony & Swami Vivekananda's 148th Birth Anniversary

The Vedanta Society of Japan [Nippon Vedanta Kyokai] brought its year-long series of events commemorating 50 years of service in Japan (June 2009 - May 2010) to a close by combining the official Closing Ceremony with Swami Vivekananda's 148th Birth Anniversary on Sunday, May 30, in Tokyo. Organized by the Society's Golden Jubilee Celebration Committee and co-organized by the Department of Global Citizenship Studies of Seisen University, a women's Catholic liberal arts university, the event was held in the campus's spacious auditorium facility. From May 26 to 30 the Society's Indo-Japan Relationship Exhibit was also on display in the foyer of the university's main building annex for students with Closing Ceremony guests visiting on Sunday.

Due to the large turnout, the opening Invocation intoned by Swami Medhasananda of the Japan Society and visiting swamis Satyalokananda and Jnanavratanaanda was delayed by some 30 minutes. Floral bouquets were offered to Sri Ramakrishna, by special guest speaker, Swami Smarananandaji Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission; to Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, by Sister Junko Shioya, Chairperson of the Managing

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Stage Altar

50th Closing Ceremony [from page 1]

Board of Seisen; and to Swami Vivekananda by the Honourable Sri H. K. Sing, Ambassador of India.

Swami Medhasananda then delivered the Welcoming Address summarizing the programmes and projects during the year in celebration of the Society's Golden Jubilee, briefly highlighting a half-century of accomplishments, and honoring early pioneers of the Society. He also highlighted the Society's as yet unfulfilled desire to (1) find an appropriate location to install a statue of Swami Vivekananda and (2) to open a Vedanta Center in Tokyo. Sister Junko Shioya also gave a brief welcome noting her travels to India with students and highlighting her universities efforts to instill Christian ideals of genuine wisdom, love and strength for the needs of the age. These addresses were followed by the ceremonial release of new Society publications by the guest speakers of the event.

The guest speakers were, in order, Swami Smaranandaji, Ambassador Singh, Tokyo Archbishop Peter Takeo Okada, Buddhist Jōdo Sect Master (Kangaku) and Professor Emeritus of Taisho University, Ryojun Sato, and Dr. Yasuji Yamaguchi of Meiji University, on the topic of Harmony and Peace. A Vote of Thanks was then delivered by Tsuyoshi Nara, Seisen Professor Emeritus and Vice President of both the Vedanta Society of Japan and the Golden Jubilee Celebration Committee.

A request was made for the auditorium to be vacated for 30 minutes to prepare for the Cultural Programme and trays of Indian snacks and bottled water were served at the exits. Soon the student cafeteria, outer courtyard and large gathering space in front of the auditorium were abuzz with nearly 600 guests as final preparations were made onstage.

A buzzer signaled the start of the Cultural Programme and after introductions a Santoor Recital featuring the eminent Pandit Shivkumar Sharma, his son Rahul, also on santoor, and Pandit Ramakumar Mishra on tabla. This was followed by original Japanese Devotional Songs led by Ms. Kaori Izumida on piano and vocals and with vocal accompaniment by Ms. Tomoko Miyake, Ms. Keiko Suzuki and Ms. Noriko Suzuki. The grand finale was a much anticipated performance of the 'Shivatandava' dance troupe of India featuring Shri Kalakrishna, Shri Pavantkumar, Shri Ranjithkumar, Smt. Bhagyamma and Smt. Mounika.



Vice President Maharaj Offering Bouquet

The event ended with a final Vote of Thanks from Mr. Jagmohan Chandrani, member of the Celebration Committee and local Indian restaurateur who provided refreshments. MC for the event was Professor Kathy Matsui of Seisen University.

During the Society's ambitious year-long Golden Jubilee calendar 7 books were published in Japanese and released at key events. Some of these include a pocket edition in two volumes of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna (in addition to the complete hardcover edition translated and published by the Society many years earlier); a book on the Upanishads; a biography of Swami Vivekananda; a booklet, Swami Vivekananda and Japan, was also published in both English and Japanese language editions; two commuter-sized volumes in Japanese entitled Inspiring Messages, Volumes 1 and 2, drawing upon mainstream religious traditions were published. A CD of original Japanese songs on the Holy Trio and a CD of Mantras and Hymns on Shiva were produced. A DVD, Swami Vivekananda - A Documentary, with Japanese sub-titles was also produced, and a special Golden Jubilee Issue of the The Universal Gospel, the Society's bi-monthly magazine, of over 300 pages with many photos was also released.

In addition to these publications, an exhibition exploring the Indo-Japan Relationship and the modern era pioneers of that relationship, Swami Vivekananda and Tenshin Okakura, was organized by the Society and held at four locations throughout the year drawing a viewership of about five thousand. Finally, service for the Homeless Narayanas initiated during the Golden Jubilee year will be continued by the Society. •



Auditorium Seats Fill

Photos from 50th Jubilee Closing Ceremony



Volunteers



Sound Check



Final Preparations



Guests Arriving



Registration



Medhasananda Welcome Address



Sister Shioya Welcome



Kangaku Sato Releases Universal Gospel

Photos from 50th Jubilee Closing Ceremony



Swami Smarananadaji



Ambassador Singh



Archbishop Okada



Professor Yamaguchi



Audience Returns



Santoor Recital



Japanese Devotional Songs



Shivatandava Dance Troupe

May Zushi Retreat 2010 Buddha's Birth Celebration

On May 16, 2010, the Monthly Retreat celebrated the birth anniversary of Gautama Buddha at the Vedanta Society of Japan's Zushi Centre. At 11:00 Swami Medhasananda led Vedic Peace Prayers followed by Buddhist chants and readings of Buddhist scripture in English and Japanese. Afterward the swami introduced the guest speaker, Reverend Dr. Shun Kageyama, a Nichiren Buddhist priest and an Institute of Contemporary Religion Advisor holding a Doctorate in Human Behavior from the University of Southern California. The swami then presented the congregation and the reverend some Buddhist sutras and asked him to lead in chanting them in the Japanese style. Kageyama has also written four books including, "What is Nichiren? (60 Years of Light and Shadow - Over the Line)", "Buddhist Body Techniques (Buddhist Medicine)", "Buddhist Temples and Revolution" and "Cured of Disease in Prayer." A slide presentation accompanied Reverend Kageyama's well received address to the assembly.

"Lord Buddha's Teaching and Practice"



Reverend Kageyama said that practice of the Buddha's teachings seems most problematic, yet necessary, in the modern world and wondered what concrete measures would help bring about a "peaceful and healthy environment" for its practice.

By way of self-introduction, Kageyama-san said that a person's approach to living is decisive and described his own early curiosity and education in human behavioral sciences abroad, physiological and psychological studies, his training as a Buddhist monk and yoga training in India some 30 years ago.

Kageyama-san said that the urge for world peace and the happiness for all beings is a need that lies within our hearts and the pursuit of which nourishes our faith. He said the major problem with modern Buddhism is really a question of how to teach what Lord Buddha taught. In this regard he lamented the many "differing Buddhisms" in Japan arising from a patriarchal system and

unwillingness to accept ideas from abroad; "even perhaps the teachings Lord Buddha Himself." But he said it was the abolishment of monasteries and the monks and nuns inhabiting them by Meiji Decree that affected the practice and imparting of Buddha's teachings the most.

The reverend also said that Buddhist training has become philology, the labored study of scripture, as interpreted and set forth by patriarchs of various sects even in Buddhist India, rather than an attitude of learning the teachings of Lord Buddha. He said it is the practice of ancient yoga techniques developed over 5,000 years, those that Lord Buddha Himself practiced, that brings the practitioner closer to Buddha-hood.

"A Yogi lives as a hermit," he continued, "practicing to control the false desires of the heart through both mental control and pranayama or breathing exercises." He went on to say that academics cannot impart enlightenment. Buddha was the extraordinary example of single-mindedness in his "moderate practice and yoga sutra," and His teachings have to be experienced, they cannot be preached.

"We are at constant battle with the five worldly passions and greed," the reverend said. "Buddhism is not just a philosophy, it is techniques leading to a controlled and purified mind. It is living a peaceful life that begins to cultivate faith."

Kageyama-san concluded by pointing out that problems related to nuclear proliferation, waste management, accidents, wars and military uses for nuclear byproducts are all the result of desire itself. Even peaceful use of nuclear energy is not possible without the consequence of other problems. Another is the idea that we can affect global warming, or climate change, by reducing gasoline usage, changing to hybrids and other steps. It is our covetousness, our desire for ever more that affects climate change, and the only way to prevent it is to cultivate faith by controlling the mind.

"Practice," he said, "brings one to an everyday sense of our world that leads to a more extraordinary world, one where academics can share and encourage others with their interpretations of a Buddhist world through their faith, experience and enlightenment." •

Building Dedication June 6, 2010 Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of the Philippines



Shrine Prepared for Puja



New Building Ready for Dedication

Preparations

Swami Medhasananda reached Manila in the early afternoon with a Philippine Airlines flight from Narita Airport on Friday, June 4, 2010. After exiting the arrival hall of Manila International Airport he mentioned to the devotees who were waiting for him that he did not mind at all Manila's warm weather, considering the unusually cold Japan days of that period. Swami Medhasananda was then driven directly to the new building of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of the Philippines, due to be dedicated the following Sunday, June 6, 2010.

The Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of the Philippines had been incorporated under the laws of the Philippines as a non-profit organization in 2006 and officially inaugurated in the year 2007. In 2008 it acquired a property formed by a plot of land of about 1,000 square meters with an old, dilapidated building on it. In 2009 the Society started work to completely renovate the building. Only the foundation, main support beams and walls were kept, the rest of the building was practically re-built for dedication.

Upon reaching the Center Swami Medhasananda first took a brief tour of the facilities and offered some suggestions to the devotees about last-minute arrangements before he had a small snack and some rest. Later on in the evening several devotees gathered in the Center for Arati and dinner with the swami, who then retired at the Center's

quarters reserved for monks for a well deserved rest after a very long day.

The following morning began with chanting and meditation were followed by breakfast.

Later on that day Revered Swami Smarananandaji, Vice President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, and his Secretary, Revered Swami Jnanavratananda, were expected to reach Manila. While some devotees were working hard in order to finalize the preparations for the much anticipated Dedication Ceremony, a few others went to the airport to receive the two Swamis.

Swamis Smarananandaji and Jnanavratananda reached the Center at about 2.30 in the afternoon and had a quick lunch before taking some rest. In late afternoon many devotees and friends gathered at the Center to pay their respects to Smarananandaji and to enjoy a lovely dinner prepared for them. It should be noted that all times during the visit of the Center's Spiritual Advisor, Swami Medhasananda, and our two most distinguished guests, meals were prepared by different devotees who really gave their absolute best to make healthy and very tasty food available for these venerated monks and devotees.

After Smarananandaji retired, Swami Medhasananda conducted a final meeting with numerous devotees to

[cont page 7]



Swami Smarananandaji Cuts Ribbon



Medhasananda and Jnanavratananda Perform Puja



Prof. Marilyn Canta



Ambassador Shri Yogendra Kumar

Philippine Dedication [from page 6]

review the final arrangements for the programs on following day, Sunday, June 6, 2010, the day of the our long awaited and labored for dedication of the building of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of the Philippines.

Dedication

Devotees started gathering at 6:30 a.m. for chanting, meditation and breakfast. The Dedication ceremony started at 9:45 with a ribbon cutting performed by Revered Swami Smarananandaji, which was met by a round of applause by the numerous devotees and friends who had gathered at the Center. Some eighty persons, including His Excellency the Ambassador of Singapore to the Philippines, an Italian Catholic Missionary, a Buddhist monk and many other distinguished guests were present.

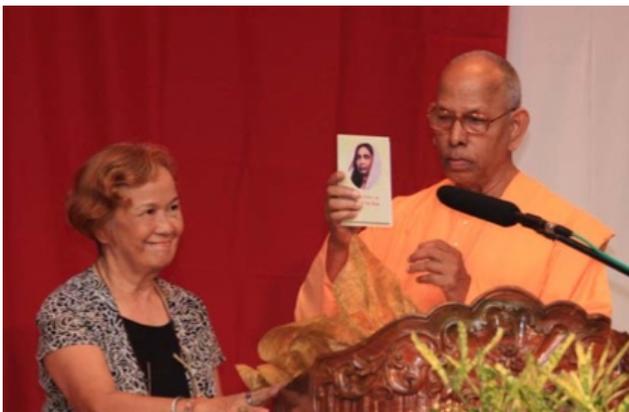
Swami Smarananandaji then offered flowers to the altar deities followed by a puja performed by Swamis Medhasananda and Jnanavratanaanda witnessed with great attention by the devotees and friends. Lunch prasad was then distributed to the participants that included both Filipino and Indian preparations. Soon after lunch the volunteers started assembling the different items to be carried to the mini auditorium of the University of Makati, where at 4.45 PM the second part of the Dedication program was due to start.

The University program started with an invocation performed by Medhasananda and Jnanavratanaanda, followed by a brief welcome address by Mr. Alejandro Bautista, President of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of the Philippines. After a short speech by Swami Medhasananda, Swami Smaranananda, released the first book published by the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of the Philippines; a Filipino version of “A Short Life of Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother” translated into Tagalog by Professor Flordeliza S. Flancia (commonly known by devotees and friends as “Nanay - mother - Flor”).

Swami Smaranananda then delivered his Benedictory Address for the Dedication Ceremony. His Excellency Shri Yogendra Kumar, Ambassador of India to Manila, then delivered his discourse on the theme “Harmony of Religions”, followed by a lively and inspiring speech given by Professor Marilyn R. Canta, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, College of Arts and Letters, University of the Philippines, who mentioned, among other things, some of her experiences during her stay in India and particularly her studies at Benares University.

Mr. Carlo Colombo closed the first part of the program giving a Vote of Thanks. During the intermission separating the first and second parts of the afternoon program participants enjoyed some snacks served in the foyer of the auditorium. When the program resumed a message addressed to the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of the

[cont page 8]



Smarananandaji and Prof. Flancia Release Tagalog Book



Alejandro Bautista, President Philippine Society

Thought of the Month

Tomorrow is often the
busiest day of the week.

... *Spanish Proverb*

Philippine Dedication [from page 7]

Philippines by Archbishop Antonio J. Ledesma, Chairman of the Episcopal Commission for Inter-religious Dialogue, and his Executive Secretary, Father Carlos V. Reyes, was read to the audience.

The cultural program began featuring Indian devotional songs performed by a few Indian lady devotees. They were followed by beautiful Indian classical dances performed by Filipino and Indian students of Mrs. Shanti Sreedhar. A selection of Tagalog and English devotional songs performed by the Choir of St. John Marie Vianney Parish closed the event to the warm applause of the audience. Some 120 persons attended the afternoon program, among them, again including, His Excellency the Ambassador of Singapore to the Philippines, an Italian Catholic missionary and a Buddhist monk. The long day came to a close with a dinner served at the newly dedicated Center for our guest swamis and a few devotees and friends.

The Visit Comes to an End

On Monday morning, June 7, some plans were briefly discussed about the future of the Manila Center; then Swami Medhasananda took some well deserved rest. On the contrary, Swami Smaranananda and his secretary were taken by car on a short sightseeing tour of the city so that they could get some familiarity with Manila. Lunch was served at the Center and the afternoon was spent in a rather relaxed mood after the hectic days that had preceded the Dedication preparations and ceremony.



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In late afternoon the revered swamis took a stroll in the Center's garden and became interested in the flowers and trees planted there, some of which they recognized as varieties also common in India. Some Filipino and Indian devotees also got the opportunity to ask questions of both Swami Medhasananda, before Arati, and Swami Smaranananda, before dinner. Dinner was served at the Center to the three Revered Swamis and several devotees.

On Tuesday morning after chanting and meditation, breakfast was attended by several devotees who had gathered at the Center to pay their respects to the Swamis, who were about to depart to their respective destinations. Swami Medhasananda went back to Japan by an early afternoon Philippine Airlines flight from Manila International Airport, while Swami's Smaranananda and Jnanavratananda returned to India via another flight. •

Contributed by Enrico Colombo / Manila



A Story to Remember

The Mouse Trap

A mouse looked through the crack in the wall to see the farmer and his wife open a package. "What food might this contain?" the mouse wondered. He was devastated to discover it was a mousetrap.

Retreating to the farmyard, the mouse proclaimed the warning: "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!"

The chicken clucked and scratched, raised her head and said "Mr. Mouse, I can tell this is of grave concern to you, but it is of no consequence to me. I cannot be bothered with it."

The mouse turned to the pig and told him "Mr. and Mrs. Farmer have bought a mousetrap! There is a mousetrap in the house!" The pig sympathized, but said "I am so very sorry, Mr. Mouse, but there is nothing I can do about it, but pray. Be assured you are in my prayers."

The mouse turned to the goat and said "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!" The goat said "Wow, Mr. Mouse. How very terrible for you, but it's no skin off my nose since I never enter the house."

So, the mouse returned to the house, head down and dejected, to face the farmer's mousetrap alone.

That very night a sound was heard throughout the house - the loud click-clack of the trap catching its prey. The farmer's wife rushed down to see what was caught. In the darkness, she did not see it was an angry, venomous snake whose tail had been caught. The snake bit the farmer's wife and the farmer rushed her to the hospital.

The snake was a rare breed and a specialist had to be called and the treatment was expensive. With no funds or insurance she received cursory treatment and was returned home later with a fever.

Everyone knows you treat a fever with fresh chicken soup, so the farmer took his hatchet to the barnyard for the soup's main ingredient. The following day in order to pay the hospital and doctor fees the farmer sold the pig to a butcher.

But his wife's sickness continued, so friends and neighbors came to sit with her around the clock. Unfortunately, her condition did not improve and after some days she passed away. As she was well liked, many relatives and townspeople came for her funeral and the farmer was forced to slaughter the sheep to provide enough food for all the guests. The mouse looked upon it all from his crack in the wall with great sadness.

So, the next time you hear someone is facing a problem and think it doesn't concern you, remember: when even one of us is threatened, we are all at risk. We are all involved in this journey called life. We must keep an eye out for one another and make an extra effort to encourage one another. Each of us is a vital thread in another person's tapestry.

... author unknown

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