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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



February Calendar

## ✧ Thus Spake ✧

*"No need of looking behind. Forward! We want infinite energy, infinite zeal, infinite courage and infinite patience; then only will great things be achieved."*

-Swami Vivekananda

*"That patient alone, who takes diet and medicine, is seen to recover – not through the work done by others."*

-Sri Shankara



### Birthdays

**Swami Adbhutananda**  
Tuesday, 7 February

\* **Sri Ramakrishna Deva**  
Thursday, 23 February

\*Since Sri Ramakrishna's Birthday follows the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in February this year, the public celebration will be held on Sunday, 18 March 2012.

### Kyokai Events

#### • February Zushi Retreat •

Sunday, 19 February  
11AM

A talk on  
*"Love and Attachment"*  
by Swami Medhasananda

Prasad Lunch

All, are welcome to attend!



## Zushi Retreat December 2011 Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi Birth Anniversary **Some Spiritual Advice of Holy Mother** by Swami Medhasananda

*The Vedanta Society of Japan celebrated the 159th Birthday of Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi at the Zushi Centre's Monthly Retreat on Sunday, 18 December 2011. The day-long celebration began with mangalariti, chanting and bhajans from 6AM. At 11AM Swami Medhasananda conducted a puja, followed by food offering and all attendees participated in pushpanjali or flower offering. The afternoon session began with reading from the Gospel of Sri Sarada and the swami continued by sharing reminiscences of devotees on the Holy Mother.*

*Due to time constraints the swami offered the following brief comments on the theme "Some Spiritual Advice of Holy Mother" in the morning session:*

We find the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna is full of discussions on spiritual topics, with Sri Ramakrishna giving lots of advice on spiritual matters. Not only that; the Master is sometimes singing and sometimes dancing as well. Yet in the Gospel of the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi,  
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## Spiritual Advice (from page 1)

we see neither singing nor dancing. We find many common conversations, but no in-depth spiritual discourses. So you see, it can be a little difficult to cull spiritual advice from the Gospel of Holy Mother. Instead, Sri Sarada Devi's entire life was a demonstration of what she wanted to teach us. While Sri Ramakrishna's life is an ideal to be followed by monastics, Holy Mother's life is the ideal for householders.

She reveals how to lead a day to day life from morning to evening; how to have better human relationships; how to do everyday work with motivation, feeling and joy; and how to do even insignificant tasks with great devotion. Holy Mother's life is a great demonstration of all this as spiritual practice. Our devotees are fond of reading the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. It makes for interesting reading no doubt, but it is very difficult for householders to follow the instructions found within. You will find rather more practical advice in the life of Holy Mother. If one reads even a little of her biography, one sees the many difficult family relationships she had. There were tremendous difficulties in maintaining her family, but she managed to do it so well. As we say now-a-days, 'Job well done!' Holy Mother is the manifestation of 'Job well done!'

Holy Mother addressed the problems we often face in our day-to-day lives. Once an initiated disciple and monk asked her, 'Mother, when we are away and occupied in works when doubts and questions come, who can we consult for proper guidance?' Then Holy Mother offered this advice. 'Always, always, keep a picture of Sri Ramakrishna with you. Have faith that He is always looking after you, that He is always with you.' When we are faced with a dilemmas or doubts, place that photo before you. Pray to him. He definitely



answers or gives some suggestion in the form of a thought. When such a thought comes, we have no doubt that this is the answer. In the depth of your mind you will feel it. Many thoughts come, but when that thought is an answer from Sri Ramakrishna, you will know beyond doubt that it is His answer. The same is true if we place the question before Holy Mother. Holy Mother put it so nicely, 'Sri Ramakrishna is a true gentleman, so if you pray to him sincerely even once, he will remember it. If it is truly necessary for you, he will answer, but it may take some time. Don't expect an immediate answer, he knows the right time.'

On another occasion the same monk asked, 'Mother, why do unholy thoughts arise in my mind?' We often see monks in seemingly in great spirits, laughing and joyful, but unseen by us can be deep struggles. We must remember that just becoming a monk does not make one perfect. One has to go through a long struggle, and we cannot understand this struggle from the outside. But this is the only way to reach perfection, whether we are householders or monks; struggle, struggle, struggle. So we needn't be shocked that a monk would seek counsel from Holy Mother about impure thoughts. We are all thus affected, though living an ethical and moral life, and in spite of our struggle, suddenly, from nowhere, such thoughts appear.

Holy Mother answered, 'You see, the natural tendency of the mind is to go downward.' It is like when embankment or a dam breaks from a sudden and strong current of water. When one tries continually to control and purify one's mind, such thoughts break through because we have such strong mental samskaras. 'Never mind!' she said. 'Try again and again. Struggle. Face it!' How long must

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**Spiritual Advice** (from page 2)

we try? As the saying suggests, 'As long as it takes!' That is why Holy Mother urges us to try again and again. She also added that holy company is very good and important, because the mind will flow upward in holy company. If holy company is not possible, then read holy books and reminiscences.

Finally, if we want moral and spiritual self-development, Holy Mother advised that it is better to focus on ourselves than on others.



On the one hand, through self-analysis and introspection we have to be aware of our own limitations, while at the same time learn to recognize the good qualities in others. Do this while remembering that everyone belongs to God and that God is in everyone. If we remember this, instead of disliking others, there will be love for others.

One of the greatest criteria of our spiritual progress is whether or not we can love everyone without any discrimination. •

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## **Mitakesan Outdoor Summer Retreat**

Ms. Miwako Tanabe contributes her notes on

### **“Positive Way of Living”**

Part I of a III Part Discourse by Swami Medhasananda

*At the summer retreat again this year at Mitake-san from July 29 to 31, we had the opportunity to hear a discourse by Swami Medhasananda. I offer here my summary of the talk on “Positive Way of Living”.*

### **Homework Assigned**

The day before his talk, Swami assigned the following homework that helped make the discourse more compelling:

1. Specifically, what ways of living do you find positive?
2. What books inspired you most?
3. Who inspired you most?
4. What message inspired you most?
5. Do you have anyone who helped you solve problems in life? If yes, who did?

At the beginning of the discourse, all attendees took turns talking about the assigned homework. Brainstorming, they organised their opinions on the assigned questions beforehand

and shared opinions among each other so they could more deeply analyse or consider their own opinions. Among other answers to the first question their top responses were:

1. “Accepting current circumstances”
2. “Live thinking what the purposes of life are”
3. “Praying to God”
4. “Trying to learn from negative things”
5. “Living ‘in the moment’”
6. “Having a way to escape, too”

However, Swami asked what we should do under such circumstances as a worsening economy; the stress resulting from the 2011 Tohoku earthquake; serious problems that could drive one to commit suicide; or difficulties that, without immediate solutions, would cause one’s next serious problem.

Can suicide end such problems? “No,” he said, “because trying to escape problems by causing one’s own death, just prolongs that reckoning for later.”  
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• Thought of the Month •

"The secret of success is constancy to purpose."

- Benjamin Disraeli

**Mitakesan** (from page 3)

We all were silent. Then Swami said, "Don't run away. Face it! You can do it if you think

you can, and you cannot if you think you cannot." He said that even when we are not sure we are strong enough, strength rises from inside to support us if we face a problem instead of running away from it. If you escape, you lose more strength. Explaining so, he gave five examples of positive ways of living.

**Five Examples of Positive Living**

1. The president of a company raised a sum of funds as no one else found possible. When he wanted to raise a donation of five million yen for recovery efforts from a natural disaster and told his employees of his idea. At first they said, "It's impossible. One million might be possible; but five million, never." He insisted, "I didn't come to you in order to hear you say, 'No, we can't'. I just want to hear your suggestions on how we can." They were so impressed with his commitment that they started to suggest many ways of making the impossible possible. As a result, they held a charity concert with well-known musicians and raised the sum they aimed for.

2. There is an American chemistry teacher who also teaches moral and ethical wisdom for good living. One day he suddenly wrote "I CANNOT" on the blackboard and asked his students, "Is this right? Is this statement correct?" They soon understood what he meant and answered, "No, it's not correct, sir. Please delete NOT." After erasing NOT, he said, "Remember 'I CAN' at all times and in the face of all trials, and you will all become important persons. Never ever forget to think 'I CAN'. He and his words remained in their hearts forever.

3. In an interview Dale Carnegie had with President Eisenhower Carnegie asked, "Who affected and inspired you most?" Eisenhower answered, "It was not a famous person who inspired me most. My mother did." He continued, "One day our family was playing cards. I

grumbled when a joker came to me. Then she suddenly stopped the game and said this seriously. 'I have valuable advice to give. In playing cards or in life, we sometimes have good cards, and sometimes bad ones. Do you grumble each time you have bad ones, saying God is unfair? Don't complain about it, but accept it. Face it. Even God's devotees cannot control what cards they receive. So, you just accept whatever cards you are dealt and keep playing. Then you will finally win.'" Serving as a ranking military officer in wartime and later as president means facing extraordinary difficulties. Eisenhower remembered his mother's words all the time and practised them.

4. There is a story from The Life of Swami Vivekananda, about Swamiji and his party climbing the Himalayas on pilgrimage. Their journey got more difficult as the oxygen became thinner and they had little food. When they came very close to the summit, an older pilgrim said, "I will stop here now. It's impossible for me. It's really a pity, but I cannot seem to reach the summit." Swamiji encouraged him with a bunch of hopeful words. "Why will you stop now?" he said. "I know this is really tough, but just turn around and see who came all the way up here from the flat land. You did. You, yourself, climbed up here. Yes, this is tough, but please don't stop. Never give up. You can do it. We have only a few miles to go. Please don't stop." Cheered by this he said, "Yes, you are right. We came up here. Let's keep going up!"

5. There is also a story about the Monkey Temple in Benares from the same book. Swamiji was running here and there because mischievous resident monkeys of the temple were chasing him. Then a temple monk, knowing full-well the behaviour of the monkeys advised him, "Don't run away, but face them!" Hearing this, Swamiji stopped running and faced them. Then they turned and ran away.

**Face It**

We were so impressed with these five real stories showing how much strength positive ways of thinking could bring out in people, that we felt as if we were being enchanted. Saying that this was mantra, swami wrote in large letters 'Do not run away, but face it. Don't give up, but carry on!'. Then we all chanted it three times feeling happier and better, and automatically dissolved into laughter.

Swami said, 'Repeat this mantra and input it  
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## Mitakesan (from page 4)

into your brain computer, which you can carry anywhere and anytime. You are not the only person that has problems. Everyone has problems. Would you escape from Japan with problem that arises? Japan had big problems right after the 1923 Great Kanto earthquake and World War II, but none ran away. They faced them and built a new Tokyo and Japan. It was the Japanese who rebuilt this country, no one else. Swami Vivekananda also said,

“Arise! Awake!” You can do it if you believe you can. So please don’t kill yourself. Your gross body could disappear but the problems would stay, so your subtle body would continue feeling pain. Keep playing. Don’t run away, but face it.’

*This is the end of Part I - Parts II and III will be presented in later editions of The Vedanta Kyokai. - editor*



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## Christmas Eve

The Vedanta Society of Japan held its annual Christmas Eve celebration at the Zushi Centre from 7:30 PM on 24 December 2011.

Swami Medhasananda conducted a worship and fruits, candies and baked goods were offered. Bible readings and a brief talk by the swami were interspersed with Christmas carols in both English and Japanese led by Mr. Lonnie Hirsch and Ms. Shanti Izumida.

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## New Year’s Kalpataru

The Vedanta Society of Japan held its annual New Year’s Kalpataru assembly at the Zushi Centre from 11AM on New Year’s Day.

Following an invocation and introduction by the swami, there were readings from the Life of Sri Ramakrishna, the Gospel of Holy Mother, Lord Buddha’s Message and the Bible. A silent prayer was followed by lunch prasad.

At 2:15PM the party then set off on foot for Kamakura to pay respects to Daibutsu (Buddha statue), Yukinoshita Catholic Church (Christ) and, finally, the Hachimangu Shrine (Shinto). •





• Story to Remember •

**The Crow and the Pitcher**

A Crow, half-dead with thirst, came upon a pitcher which had once been full of water; but when the Crow put its beak into the mouth of the pitcher he found that only very little water was left in it, and that his beak could not reach in far enough to get at it. He tried and he tried, and was about to give up in despair when a thought came to him.

He then took a pebble and dropped it into the pitcher with a splash. He took another pebble and several more. At long last, he saw the water rising nearer his reach and after casting in a few more pebbles he was able to quench his thirst and save his life.

Little by little does the trick. - Aesop

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