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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

MAY Calendar



Birthdays

Sri Buddhadev
Sunday 6 May

Kyokai Events

• Yoga-Asana •

Saturdays
May 12, 19, 26 from 11am
Contact the Zushi Center

• May Zushi Retreat •

May 20 from 10:30am
Talk by Mr. Kondo
Chief Organizer, Service to the
Homeless - Kotobukicho Park
Talk: My Experience of Service
to the Homeless
All are welcome to attend!

• Kansai Satsanga •

26 May (Sat) 13:30~17:00
Osaka Learning Center

• Swami Vivekananda •

Annual Public Birth Celebration
at the Indian Embassy
27 May 14:00~18:00
All are welcome to attend!

• Summer Outdoor Retreat •

Mt. Mitakesan
July 29-31 / Reserve Early
Contact Shanti-san
<shanti.k@r3.dion.ne.jp>



✧ Thus Spake ✧

“The peace of the Bhakta's calm resignation is a peace that passeth all understanding, and is of incomparable value.”

- Swami Vivekananda

“Among the contributory factors of liberation, devotion stands supreme, and it is the search for one's own true nature that is meant by devotion.”

- Shankara

Zushi Retreat March 2012

175th Birth Celebration of Sri Ramakrishna

Vedanta Society of Japan New Annex Building Dedication Ceremony
(Summary prepared by Ms. Satsuki Yokota)

The Vedanta Society of Japan held the concluding celebration of Sri Ramakrishna Deva's 175th birth anniversary and dedicated its new Annex building on Sunday March 18, 2012.

The main building of the Society in Zushi City, which was constructed in 1978, houses a small shrine where we hold our ceremonies and monthly retreats. This shrine can at best comfortably accommodate 30-35 persons. As a result, during key ceremonies, which are attended by a large number of people, most of the attendees cannot witness the programme properly or comfortably. So the Society purchased a plot of land in 2010 just a few steps down from the main building in order to build an annex.

The new Annex was designed by architect Mr. Masato Yamauchi, who was introduced to the Society some years ago by one of its devotees and patrons, the late Mr. Takashi Sato. Mr. Yamauchi also designed Holy Mother's House, our guest house for women, which was inaugurated in 2005. The Annex had to be designed to accommodate as
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175th Celebration and Dedication (from page 1)

many people as possible in a very limited space, and thanks to his creativity, the structure now allows several tens of people to attend events. Also, through the efforts of Mr. Seizo Takemoto, president of Takemoto Carpentry, and his colleagues, the construction work was carried out at the lowest possible cost in the very short period of time. Since the dedication ceremony of the building was planned to be held together with our Sri Ramakrishna Birth Celebration, the Society's biggest annual event, though the exterior could not be completed by that day, the interior was beautifully finished, however, with both natural and electric lighting and soft, pale shades. On the morning of the event the weather forecast called for rain, so the carpenters set up rain protection using construction tarps outside the Main Building and Annex for the guests.

For the success of this event, many volunteers worked together making various preparations under Swami Medhasananda's direction. In particular, a few of those volunteers serving as leaders started talking with Swami more than a month before the celebration day, creating to-do lists and recruiting volunteers by email and other means. As a result, volunteer sub-leaders were provided with task assignment tables as early as a month before hand at the Zushi Retreat in February.

On Sunday, 11 March, a week before the celebration day, about ten volunteers gathered at Zushi Centre working on a wide range of

tasks. Both the Main Building and Holy Mother's House were cleaned thoroughly. At the Main Building ritual items were also washed and polished. Moreover, beddings were brought in and arranged to accommodate nearly twenty guests coming from many places overseas and around Japan to participate in the celebration.



On Tuesday the 13th, Swami Jyotirupanandaji, President of the Ramakrishna Society Vedanta Centre of Russia in Moscow, arrived at the Centre. From this day on, with the number of guests gradually increasing, volunteers took turns with chores such as preparing meals.

On Saturday the 17th, volunteers came to Zushi amid torrential rains throughout the day to make final preparations for the celebration to be held the following day. There were still several assignments, such as preparing loads of flowers for gar-

lands to decorate the photographs of the Holy Trinity and for Pushpanjali; preparing the fruits and sweets offerings and items of Homa (fire offering); and assembling and setting-up of shoe racks in the Annex ground floor garage. Also, since electric work in the Annex was finally completed that evening, it was only late at night that the stage could be set up and chairs set in place and the interior beautifully decorated.

On Sunday the 18th, the celebration and dedication event began at 6 a.m. with mangalarati, chanting and meditation. At 10:30 a.m. the main guest for the day's festivities, Revered Swami Jyotirupanandaji, conducted the

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Celebration and Dedication (from page 2)

ribbon-cutting ceremony in the hallway of the New Annex. Swami Medhasananda then gave him and the other guests a short guided tour inside the two-story building composed of a multi-functional hall, small kitchenette and toilet on the ground floor and two small living rooms, a bathroom, full-kitchen and audio mixing room upstairs. From the galleried upstairs landing and the monitored audio mixing room the multi-functional hall below can be seen and many took advantage of this vantage point to observe the proceedings.

Puja, arati, pushpanjali and homa were conducted from 11:00 a.m., followed by lunch prasad at 1:30 p.m. All the large rooms in both the Main Building and Annex were utilised so all the attendees could enjoy lunch at the same time.

In the afternoon session from 3 p.m. Swami Medhasananda gave a welcome speech and Mr. Kenichi Mitamura, Secretary of the Society, gave a vote of thanks. Swami also read a message from Swami Atmasthanandaji, President of Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission in India, on his behalf. Swami Jyotirupanandaji then gave a discourse on Sri Ra-



makrishna's Uniqueness. A big screen was placed next to the altar where a Japanese translation was displayed for English speeches and vice versa.

For the Cultural Programme a choir of thirty singers composed of Society devotees and friends from Kailas Yoga School sang three Japanese devotional songs. Then two Indian devotees, Mr. Samudra Datta Gupta and Mrs. Sreyasi Mandal each sang two Indian devotional songs. A beautiful sitar performance by Sri Amit Ray, a distinguished sitar player, accompanied by Sri Sudarsan on tabla and Ms. Tomomi Kitami on tanpura impressed the attendees, followed by a tea break.

Following Vespers, which was performed at 6 p.m., Swami Jyotirupanandaji gave another talk regarding the Vedanta Movement in Russia, interpreted by Ms Yoko Sasaki, which was highly captivating.

By the grace of Sri Ramakrishna and thanks to the cooperation and hard work of the many devotee volunteers, the ceremony was conducted smoothly as planned while accommodating about 170 attendees. The day was a fantastic and memorable one for all. •

(*Note: Many more photos are at www.vedanta.jp)



Sri Ramakrishna's 175th Birth Anniversary and Dedication of New Annex Building
Welcome Address
by Swami Medhasananda

Revered Swami Jyotirupanandaji, devotees and friends, on behalf of the Vedanta Society of Japan, I cordially welcome you to today's combined programmes of the Birth Anniversary Celebration of Sri Ramakrishna Deva and the Dedication of the Society's New Annex Building. It is our great pleasure to welcome Revered Swami Jyotirupanandaji, President of our Order's Moscow Centre in Russia, whom we have invited especially for today's programme to dedicate the new building and also to deliver an address in the Afternoon Session. We also welcome Sri Ananta Krishna, Counselor Indian Embassy, and his wife, and Dr. Jiban Ranjan Magundar, Chargé d'Affairs, Bangladesh Embassy.

We are also very happy to note that our devotees and friends came from far and near to attend this august programme including, Dr. Goswami from Canada, Mr. and Mrs. Ganguli, Mr. Enrico Colombo and Mrs. Chiplunkar from the Philippines, and our Japanese devotees from such far off locations as Okinawa, Beppu, Osaka and Yamagata, all of whom are with us today to celebrate this special occasion.

Our Society is a branch of the Ramakrishna Order headquartered in India, founded to study, practice and preach the message of Vedanta, the ancient philosophy of India, as exemplified by the life Sri Ramakrishna, the prophet of Modern India. Sri Ramakrishna's life and message, which is universal, harmonistic, rationalistic, modern, and yet deeply spiritual, has been inspiring millions around the world and giving them solace and joy.

Presently Japan is undergoing a series of crises with a continuing economic downturn, recent natural disasters and consequent horrific loss of life and continuing radiation from damaged nuclear power plants, and other various problems and social maladies. Consequently, many people of this country have become victims of a sustained peace-less-ness and constrained by a lack of direction in life. In this backdrop, it is our firm belief that the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna will be a lighthouse beacon for the tempestuous lives of the people of the country and light up the path to peace, joy, strength and wisdom.

On this occasion, celebrating Sri Ramakrishna's birth anniversary, we request that you study Sri Ramakrishna more deeply and follow his teachings as much as you can to your great benefit. This Society is committed to helping you in this regard.

Revered Swami Jyotirupanandaji, our guest of honor today, will also give an enlightened speech on Sri Ramakrishna, which, I am sure, will help us to understand Sri Ramakrishna better.

Jyotirupanandaji, a senior monk of our Order, is a scholar of Sanskrit and Hindu Scripture. In 1993 he was assigned as the first president of our Russian Centre where he has been living and preaching the message of Vedanta and Sri Ramakrishna successfully in spite of some unfavorable circumstances, including stiff resistance from orthodox religious groups. As an Indian not used to living through long and severe winters, he has had to learn to live where temperatures can fall as low as minus 30 degrees celsius. Without an indomitable missionary spirit and unsurpassed zeal to preach the sterling spiritual traditions of India, one could not have continued the work of spreading these truths for such a long period of time.

This new building, which we call the Annex, as you know, was dedicated in the morning by Swami Jyotirupanandaji. Now, let me briefly give you a little background for the necessity of this new construction:

The main building of our Society, which was constructed in 1975, houses a small shrine where we hold our ceremonies and Monthly Retreats. As many of you are aware, that shrine room can at best accommodate 30-35 people comfortably. As a result, during key ceremonies, when many more people attend, it is not possible for many to witness the programme. To redress this problem we purchased this plot of land just a few steps from the main building in 2010.

As you can now see, we have constructed this two-storey building housing a more spacious ground-floor room for holding ceremonies, plus two small living rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom on the second floor. We hope to utilize
(con't page 5)

Welcome Address (from page 4)

ize this building to conduct special ceremonies and programmes, as well as for yoga classes and in various other ways. Though it is evident the building is not, yet, fully complete, we took the opportunity of Sri Ramakrishna's birth anniversary, our Centre's biggest annual event, to dedicate the building, as a separate dedication ceremony would have been quite problematic to organize. As such, we regret any inconvenience caused by any incomplete construction or furnishment.

In this connection I should also mention that the architect, Mr. Yamauchi, was introduced to us some years ago by the late Mr. Takashi Sato, one of our devotees and patrons. Mr. Yamauchi also designed or guest house, Holy Mother's House, which was inaugurated in 2005 and is much appreciated by our devotees. I am confident the design of the present building, which Mr. Yamauchi accepted as a challenge to design for accommodating as many people as possible in a rather small space, will be equally appreciated. Yamauchi-san's unassuming and friendly demeanor, along with his

innovative ideas and skills have made him both dear and indispensable to us over the years.

We must also mention that Mr. Seizo Take-moto, the builder, not only did the job of construction at the lowest possible cost, but he and his colleagues did the nearly impossible job of readying the building for today's dedication in a remarkably short period of time.

We are extremely thankful to our donors, whose contributions helped us to purchase the land, design the building and substantially complete construction. May God bless them.

We hope more and more people will visit our Ashram, situated in this beautiful area, and take advantage of the various facilities provided for their benefit.

Finally, we pray to Sri Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda, whose infinite grace has made it possible for our Center to grow thus far, that they may continue to guide us into the future. •

Oita Yoga Retreat at St. Maria Cloister

Ms. Michiko Shinriki contributes her notes on Swami Medhasananda's visit



The fourth Oita Yoga Retreat, held at St. Maria Cloister in Yufuin, Oita Prefecture, was organized by yoga instructors, Mr. Yasu and Mrs. Yuko Jinen, and Mr. Masanobu and Mrs. Michiko Shinriki from Usuki, Oita between 30 March and 1 April 2012. Swami Medhasananda Maharaj was the guest speaker. Thirty-three people joined in the two-night programme.

This year Maharaj gave discourses on Jnana Yoga and Positive Way of Living. He said, "If

we do not know ourselves, we will waste our lives. The biggest ignorance of ours is lack of knowledge about our own Self. It is important to learn about ourselves by investigating deeply what is our real nature, which is precisely the theme of Jnana Yoga." He also explained clearly giving easy-to-understand examples like, "If you think that you will dig a well when your house catches fire, that does not work. We need to practice in a day-to-day life discriminating between 'Real' and 'Unreal' and focusing on inner Self."

In the guided meditation after the vesper service in the evening, we meditated according to the path of Jnana Yoga. At the meal times we kept silence, we practised spiritual discrimination under Maharaj's direction.

After the morning meditation we stretched ourselves doing Yuru Yoga or Loose Yoga led by Mr Jinen. Before the vesper we walked with Maharaj in Yufuin, where spring had just arrived. At satsanga in the evening, Mr Takashi, Ms. Chizuko, Ms. Ravi and Mr. Oto of the Masaki family from Kumamoto gave a concert where we enjoyed their gentle and purifying songs.

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Oita Retreat (from page 5)

On the last morning of the retreat Maharaj taught us a devotional song for Shiva and talked about Positive Way of Living, saying that in order to practice a positive life it is important to write some of the inspiring messages on a piece of paper, put it on the table and read them every day, which will help us to continue our motivation of a “positive living”.

In the afternoon participants made comments and opinions and asked questions regarding many messages told by Maharaj in the Q&A session. In this fruitful retreat Maharaj offered us practical advice we could practice in everyday life and thus elevate ourselves. •



Satsanga in Okinawa

On Sunday 29 January, Swami Medhasananda gave a talk on Positive Way of Living at the public discourse held at a Hindu temple in Kitanakagusuku Village, Okinawa. Twenty-four people attended the event organized by Ms Chiemi Shinya and Ms Rajani from Yoga Niketan.



Gratitude Speech

Mr. Kenichi Mitamura, Secretary, Vedanta Society of Japan

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Revered Swami Jyotirupanandaji, President Maharaj of Russian Ramakrishna Mission and to all of you coming from all over Japan, from North to South, Hokkaido to Okinawa, and far away from Russia, Canada and the Philippines today for the 175th Birth Celebration of Sri Ramakrishna and the Completion Ceremony of our Japan Society.

Slowly, but surely, the number of devotees in Japan has been increasing and our society celebrated its 50th anniversary last year. Recently it has become increasingly difficult to accommodate all the guests gathering for our major events in our main building, therefore it was been decided to build a new annex in this, our 51st year.

There was a substantive spirit of service, effort and hard work by many people to reach this stage in building the new annex. Since the establishment of this Society devotees have been dedicated to our development for 50 years. We owe what we have today to those passionate devotees. I would like to thank them from the bottom of my heart for their hard work and dedication.

My hearty thanks also go to Mr. Yamauchi, 1st-class kenchikushi (architect) license holder, who designed the annex, and Takemoto Builders, who together undertook and met our somewhat difficult and unusual requirements. Also I would like to thank Mr. Yutaka Miyake, the former-Secretary of the Society, who made efforts and worked painstakingly from the beginning to conclude the contracts necessary for the annex building.

I must also thank the many devotees who have made extremely generous donations for this construction and our neighbors who conduct their yoga classes here for their thoughtful con-

sideration of us. It seems like just yesterday that so many Japanese spent their days and nights with feelings of insecurity, worry and fear due to the disastrous Tohoku earthquake and tsunami last year.

At this time last year, there was no gasoline; all bottled water and rice had been sold out; supplies of food and commodities were unavailable in the supermarkets within days. There were even regularly scheduled blackouts in many areas due to electricity shortages. Exactly one year has passed since then.



Our small Society undertook efforts to serve quake and tsunami victims as much as possible and we will continue this service with your continued cooperation as well. It is one of the teachings of Swami Vivekananda, the founder of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, to serve the needy and the poor as God.

Today we live in troubled times. It is a fact that there are many who feel uneasy and view the future in a gloomy light. If we think of the present condition of our country, you will see that the need for

this Society today becomes far more important than ever. And it is the mission of this Society to fill the role as a shelter for hearts and spirits, not just a physical shelter.

This society is open to all freely at anytime; as a place just to feel serene; as a place to rest your tired wings; as a place to observe yourself; as a place to purify your Self; as a place to get peace and bliss; as a place to obtain higher knowledge; as a place to find who you really are. We hope that this facility will be used freely by devotees whenever required.

(con't page 8)

Gratitude (from page 7)

In closing, I would like to state that we were able to host today's event by the grace of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda. It was also realized due to the efforts of around 30 volunteers who performed their work as karma yoga, and served long hours by cutting their sleep hours and giving priority to these tasks over their own self interests in the spirit of members of the greater Sri Ramakrishna family.

I would like to extend my hearty gratitude to Mr. Atsushi Suzuki-san and Ms. Izumida-san who served as volunteer leaders, the members of Kailas Yoga Group, Sophia-san who cooked very delicious food, the devotees from the Philippines, and all the devotees who helped so much behind the scenes. I would like you to join me in expressing our gratitude by clapping our hands.

Now I would like to end my gratitude speech by sincerely wishing that each and every one of you who has spent your day off to attend this event with us receive the grace of Sri Ramakrishna.

Thank you very much.

• **Thought of the Month** •

Faith, in fact, is right knowledge. For faith is not believing something which our intelligence denies. It is the choice of the nobler hypothesis. Faith is the resolve to place the highest meaning on the facts which we observe.

Gerald Heard "Prayers and Meditations"

• **Story to Remember** •

The Moon Cannot Be Stolen

Ryokan, a Zen master, lived the simplest kind of life in a little hut at the foot of a mountain. One evening a thief visited the hut only to discover there was nothing of value to steal.

Ryokan returned and caught him. "You have come a long way to visit me," he told the prowler, "and you should not return empty-handed. Please take my clothes as a gift."

The thief was bewildered, but he took the clothes and slunk away.

Ryokan sat naked, watching the moon. "Poor fellow," he mused, "I wish I could have given him this beautiful moon."

... Zen Koans

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