



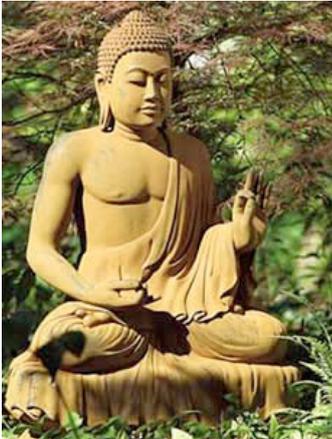
May 2014 - Volume 12 Number 05

日本ヴェダンタ協会ニュースレター

The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

JUNE Calendar



Kyokai Events

• June Zushi Retreat •

Sunday, June 15, 11:am
Celebrating
Lord Buddha's
Birth Anniversary
Puja / Worship

Special Guests:

Swami Satyalokanandaji
Ramakrishna Mission
Singapore

Reverend Hoken Suzuki

Ryūkō-ji Temple,
Enoshima

Lunch Prasad
Afternoon Session

• Summer Retreat •

"The Practice of Karma Yoga"
At Kōyasan Shingon-shū
June 19~21

Near Sign Up Now!
See page 11 for details!

✧ Thus Spake ✧

"The Man who works for others, without any selfish motive, really does good to himself."

— Sri Ramakrishna

"For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

— Jesus [Mark 10:45]

Impact of Swami Vivekananda on the Philosophical and Religious Ideas of the World: Present Scenario and Future Prospect

A Talk by Swami Tyagananda

This talk by Swami Tyaganandaji, a Hindu Chaplin at both Harvard and MIT and resident Monk in Charge of the Vedanta Society of Boston, a branch of the Ramakrishna Mission, was delivered on March 26, at the Embassy of India's ICC (India Cultural Centre) Auditorium in Tokyo for a Seminar and Exhibition on Swami Vivekananda and Okakura Tenshin, sponsored by the Indian Embassy in collaboration with the Vedanta Society of Japan, Tagore 150 Japan and Discover India Club (DIC).

It is a great joy and privilege to be here with you all, and I am grateful to Swami Medhasanandaji Maharaj for his kind invitation. This is my first visit to Japan and I am reminded of a letter that Swami Vivekananda wrote to Okakura Kakuzo, in which he said:

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"Impact of Swami Vivekananda on the Philosophical and Religious Ideals of the World: Present Scenario and Future Prospect"

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Impact (from page1)

“Japan to me is a dream — so beautiful that it haunts one all his life.” I feel I am most fortunate to get this opportunity to live the dream. As many of you are aware, Swami Vivekananda’s 150th birthday celebrations are being observed for over a year now in many countries the world over—not only in the Vedanta centres, but also in high schools and college campuses.

I would like to share with you today a few thoughts on Swami Vivekananda’s impact on the world of ideas. Impacts are of various kinds. There is, on one hand, the material impact, when two objects collide. We hear about the possibility of an asteroid colliding with the earth. Even though this may be a remote possibility, the danger and destruction involved in it are very real. While an asteroid striking the earth is an event largely out of human control, there have been other material impacts in history—such as the one made by the atomic bombs in Nagasaki and Hiroshima in 1945—which have left an indelible mark on our collective consciousness due to the extent of death and destruction they produced.

In contrast to such deadly impacts are the impacts produced in the world of ideas, especially ideas in the fields of philosophy and religion. These have led to insights and constructive practices which have instilled new life into humanity and have raised human consciousness to higher levels. Those who produced such benevolent impacts are often adored and sometimes even worshiped as saints, prophets and incarnations. Swami Vivekananda belonged to this group of enlightened beings. His life and his words have left a lasting impact on the world of his times—and on the world today, 150 years after his birth.

To understand Swamiji’s impact in a proper context, we need to retrace our

steps and go back in time to see how it all began. The beginning was silent, so silent that hardly anyone knew about it and practically no one imagined how the story would develop. A young boy named Ramakrishna, born and raised in a little village in Bengal in India, was so consumed by the love of God that he began to have amazing mystical experiences. When he came to Kolkata and became a priest in the Divine Mother Kali’s temple in Dakshineswar, his spiritual practices became even more intense. His mystical experiences not only corroborated what the ancient scriptures said, but also went beyond them. Like bees that gather around a fully bloomed lotus, sincere seekers of God gathered around Sri Ramakrishna. The nucleus of this gathering was a group of young men who were fired by the spirit of renunciation and the goal of God-realization. This group became the first generation of the Ramakrishna Order of monks, whose leader was Swami Vivekananda.

The early years of Swamiji were mostly spent in wandering across India. Although he tried to keep out of the limelight, it was impossible for a person of his calibre and spiritual attainments not to attract the attention of people. Everywhere he went, he inspired people to lead lives guided by moral and spiritual values. The impact of his personality and teaching was immense, but by and large he managed to avoid being a celebrity. All of this changed when he became a delegate at the World’s Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893. Almost overnight he became a sensation. The light of spirituality that shone through him couldn’t remain hidden any longer. The impact he made on that occasion was spectacular.

But no “sensation” lasts forever. Some sensations disappear as quickly as they emerge. In Swamiji’s case, the initial enthusiasm and fervour he generated in the

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Impact (from page 2)

Western world waned within a few years and it almost seemed as if it had died. But looking at today's world, we know it didn't. The spiritual seeds which Swamiji sowed into the world are now sprouting everywhere. His impact on the world after his passing has been so subtle that only a keen observer can see how much the world has changed due to Swamiji.

When Swamiji described India's impact on world thought, he may as well have been describing the nature of his own impact on the world. This is what Swamiji said:

'Our message has gone out to the world many a time, but slowly, silently, unperceived. ... The one characteristic of Indian thought is its silence, its calmness. ... Like the gentle dew that falls unseen and unheard, and yet brings into blossom the fairest of roses, has been the contribution of India to the thought of the world. Silent, unperceived, yet omnipotent in its effect, it has revolutionised the thought of the world, yet nobody knows when it did so.'

This is precisely what has happened with Swamiji's contribution to world thought. His Irish disciple, Sister Nivedita, made a profound prediction a century ago. She wrote in a letter: "You see, when we who understood Swamiji and remember him are dead, there will come a long period of obscurity and silence, for the work that he did. It will seem to be forgotten, until, suddenly, in 150 or 200 years, it will be found to have transformed the West." Today we are seeing the truth of this prediction. This is only the beginning.

Which ideas of Swami Vivekananda have left their deep imprint on the religious consciousness of today's world? Of the many that can be cited, I shall focus on only five—namely, Swamiji's ideas concerning

the divine spirit, spiritual evolution, harmony of religions, globalisation, and nationalism. I shall speak briefly on each of these.

The Glory of the Human Spirit

The first thing that comes to mind is Swamiji's relentless emphasis on the glory of the human spirit. He traced the cause of all of our problems to weakness—physical weakness, mental weakness, emotional weakness, intellectual weakness. The only way to overcome weakness is strength. He encouraged people to be not only physically strong but also mentally strong. He said that we should strive to have both "muscles of iron" and "nerves of steel."

Like all great spiritual leaders, he also emphasised the importance of a moral and ethical life, and also a life filled with deep faith in God. While the importance of moral courage and religious courage has been taught by many, and great exemplars of both exist throughout history, the importance of spiritual courage—or courage derived from our nature as the Ātman, the spirit within—was Swami Vivekananda's special contribution.

It is not as if this was not known before. The discovery of the Ātman is at the core of Vedanta philosophy. But generations of Vedanta thinkers and practitioners had busied themselves for centuries with reflecting on the impermanence of the observed universe and on the freedom of the spirit which is trapped within. It was Swami Vivekananda who changed the course of Vedantic thinking by pointing out that the spirit is not merely a trapped victim under the material layers of the body and mind, but a powerhouse of strength, goodness, purity. Even today Swamiji's glowing words infuse hope in our hearts:

(con't page 4)

Impact (from page 3)

'Let every man and woman and child, without respect of caste or birth, weakness or strength, hear and learn that behind the strong and the weak, behind the high and the low, behind every one, there is that Infinite Soul, assuring the infinite possibility and the infinite capacity of all to become great and good. Let us proclaim to every soul: Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached. Arise, awake! Awake from this hypnotism of weakness. None is really weak; the soul is infinite, omnipotent, and omniscient. Stand up, assert yourself, proclaim the God within you, do not deny Him! ... Teach yourselves, teach every one his real nature, call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.'

Feminism as a movement in contemporary history is generally traced back to the nineteenth century. Gender inequality is a longstanding problem. Ensuring that women have equal political, economic and social rights, and equal opportunities in education and employment, has not been easy—and there is still a long way to go. The problems related to gender inequality have been defined and analysed through various perspectives.

Swami Vivekananda brought the light of Vedanta to shine upon issues related to women. He pointed out that all gender-based discrimination denies the basic truth that the same spirit shines forth in all of us, men and women. Women are in no way inferior to men. In the Vedas and the Upanishads, some of the greatest teachers were women and they received the same respect as men.



When asked what he thought of the “women question,” Swamiji’s answer was clear: “Am I a woman that you ask me that question again and again? Who are you to solve women’s problems? ... Hands off! They will solve their own problems.” Students of his life can hear in their mind Swamiji’s thundering voice: “I shall not rest till I root out this distinction of sex. Is there any sex distinction in the Ātman? Out with the differentiation between men and women—all is Ātman! Give up the identification with the body, and stand up!”

Harmony of Religions

Another great contribution of Swami Vivekananda to the spiritual thought of the world deals with what is essential and what is nonessential in religion. In his often-quoted words:

'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy — by one, or more, or all of these — and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.'

Impact (from page 4)

While this formulation may be accepted fully by religions that originated in the Indian subcontinent, the spirit of it will find resonance in other spiritual traditions as well. Today nearly everyone agrees that religion has aspects which are essential and those which are not essential, although people may debate which aspects are essential and which are not. Nevertheless, this idea has now come to stay. It has opened up heretofore unavailable possibilities of finding a common ground among what the different religions see as “essentials”. This makes it easier to explore ways to restore harmony between religions.

Spiritual Evolution

One significant way in which religions differ, and in which even traditions within a religion often differ with one another, is in understanding how the individual soul is related to the Supreme Being, or God. There is the dualistic position in which both the individual and God are eternally distinct beings. There is the non-dualistic position in which the essence of the individual and God are viewed as one and the same. Then there is the intermediate position in which the individual is considered a part of the larger whole which God represents.

Theologians have often wrangled with one another while trying to prove that only their view is right and others are wrong. The debate has been endless and, considering that it has been going on for centuries, it is unlikely that it would ever end. Or so it seemed, until Swami Vivekananda arrived on the scene. He pointed out that all the existing views are true. In his words: “We are not traveling from error to truth, but from truth to truth. From a lower truth to a higher truth.”

Having learnt the lesson at the feet of his teacher, Sri Ramakrishna, Swamiji pointed

out something we had known all along but never really applied it to our understanding of God. The insight is simply this: love leads to oneness. In the beginning God is a distant figure, often a fearsome presence. As love grows in our hearts, we come closer to God and feel a greater connection with God. Our relationship gets stronger, the bond becomes warmer, and we feel ourselves to be a part of God. When the intensity of love increases, a point is reached when nothing separates the soul from God. The soul and God are no longer two independent entities. Only the One remains. In Swamiji’s words:

‘These are the three stages which every religion has taken. First we see God in the far beyond, then we come nearer to him and give him omnipresence so that we live in him; and at last we recognise that we are he.’

Swami Vivekananda thus taught that those who take spiritual life seriously need not waste time trying to prove one another wrong or feel threatened by viewpoints which look different from our own. We only need to be sincere in our love for God—and our purity and sincerity will bring us to the same truth toward which all are headed from their own vantage points.

Globalisation

Science and technology have not only brought us greater knowledge about our planet but also made our lives a lot more comfortable. We are now able to travel more easily than our ancestors did. We have easier access to books, places and people. Because of all this, the world seems to have shrunk and societies everywhere have become more diverse. We have also become more interdependent than ever before.

All of this is a great blessing. It reinforces

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Buddha's teaching that everything is transitory and everything is interdependent. This is also Vedanta's teaching. Buddha, after all, was one of the greatest teachers of Vedanta, as Swami Vivekananda was fond of pointing out. In the midst of all impermanence is the reality of our true Self, the Ātman, the spirit. Every one of us is really the Ātman—the birthless, the deathless, the free and pure being. If we can keep this in mind, we can have all the blessings of globalisation without getting entangled into everything around us. It is this entanglement which produces pain and suffering in life.

Nationalism

From Swami Vivekananda we learn that the awareness of the world and our place in it need not prevent us from our other somewhat limited identities, such as our national identity. Our love for the entire world need not create a conflict in the mind about our love for our own country. We can be fervent patriots and yet be completely universal.

Swami Vivekananda is often referred to in India as a patriot-saint. He loved his country intensely, even though none was more aware than he of his country's shortcom-

ings. And even though his love for India knew no bounds, his love for the entire world was not any less.

All of you living in this great country will be happy to know that Swamiji viewed the love that you have for your country as ideal, and always held it up as a model for Indians. He told them that the world had never seen such a patriotic and artistic race as the Japanese. He also told them that the key to Japan's greatness was the faith you in Japan have in yourselves and your love for your country. He said to Indians:

'If you catch the social morality and the political morality of the Japanese, you will be as great as they are. The Japanese are ready to sacrifice everything for their country, and they have become a great people.'

I am delighted today to be in your midst—in the midst of the descendants of great people. You have a great heritage to preserve and a great tradition to maintain. I would encourage all of you to study Swami Vivekananda deeply. His teachings are filled with power and truth. May they help us be better human beings, and the world we live in, a better place to live. •



The Pioneers of the Indo-Japan Relationship

Swami Vivekananda • Okakura Tenshin
[Sri Ramakrishna]

The Humanism of Swami Vivekananda

Dr. Kuniko Hirano

This talk by Dr. Kuniko Hirano, Collaborative Fellow, Institute of Asian Cultures, Sophia University, Tokyo, Japan was also delivered on March 26, at the Embassy of India's ICC (India Cultural Centre) Auditorium for a Seminar and Exhibition on Swami Vivekananda and Okakura Tenshin, sponsored by the Indian Embassy in collaboration with the Vedanta Society of Japan, Tagore 150 Japan and Discover India Club (DIC).

Introduction

Your Excellency Ambassador Deepa Gopalan Wadhwa, Respected Swami Tyaganandaji Maharaj, Respected Swami Medhasanandaji Maharaj, revered co-speakers, Dr. Kana Tomizawa, Professor Takashi Okakura, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am indeed deeply honored to speak at such a memorable gathering, organized in honor of Swami Vivekananda and Okakura Tenshin. As a collaborative fellow of the Institute of Asian Cultures of Sophia University I have been carrying out research on Swami Vivekananda, and in addition, as a director of the Padma Yoga Ashram, I have been engaged in the teaching and practice of Yoga.

Approximately 30 years ago when I was a junior high school student, I happened to visit the Nippon Vedanta Kyokai in Zushi for the first time, along with my mother. Since it was my first experience to see an Indian Swami, a Hindu shrine and so on, I felt a bit tense, but I still recall strolling in Hayama along with Swamiji and certain Japanese members. It was after such an experience that I began to be gradually drawn into the thought and practice of Swami Vivekananda.

Besides this, during my childhood I happened to live near the Tokyo University of the Arts (or Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku) located in Ueno, which was formerly the Tokyo Fine Arts School (or Tokyo Bijutsu Gakkou), where Okakura Tenshin had served as president. My uncle, who at the time was a student in the faculty of fine arts and who studied Japanese painting at that university, often took me to the campus, and hence I recall having heard often

the name of Okakura Tenshin. Today as I speak, I do so after the lapse of 40 years of such happy experiences, and I sincerely feel that I have attained a close relationship with those two eminent personalities, namely Swami Vivekananda and Okakura Tenshin.

My Participation in the this Program

From January 25th to 30th this year, thanks largely to the kind assistance of Swami Medhasanandaji Maharaji, I was fortunate enough to participate in the closing programs of the 150th anniversary celebrations of the birth of Swami Vivekananda, that were held at the Belur math in Kolkata, in India. I was informed that there were around 13,000 participants from both within the country and overseas, who had arrived for the 6 days program. The Japanese participants who were 12 in number formed the largest contingent of foreign participants. I was overwhelmed to see the meeting place filled with people, which was set up beside the Ramakrishna temple in the Belur math. During the international seminar that formed part of this program, I was deeply impressed to see the prayers of diverse religious groups, namely Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Jainism that were offered, and this gave me the feeling that the harmony of religions as advocated by Swami Vivekananda, was truly being realized.

Within the Sri Ramakrishna temple, the Sri Sarada Devi Holy Mother temple, and the Swami Vivekananda temple of Belur math, I saw many worshipping by touching the ground with their hands, knees, and forehead and meditating, and on one occa-

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Humanism (from page 7)

sion I also joined in the evening prayers and arati at the Sri Ramakrishna temple, which was filled with devotees. It was a powerful experience. This was my forth visit to the Belur math, and I was deeply impressed at seeing the different prayers that were offered.

The Humanism of Swami Vivekananda

I wish to pay my sincere homage to the monks of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, who inherited the teachings of the trinity of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi the Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda, and who are now engaged in a variety of social works such as the service of others, education, and medical care, besides religious missionary work. I would like to ponder over the reasons as to why so many are attracted by their thought and activities. One reason for this I believe may be the spirit of Swami Vivekananda's humanism, which ceaselessly flows at the base of the activities of both the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

What does this humanism consist of? Briefly speaking it is the love that is directed towards every person, a love that has no discrimination, and which transcends poverty, wealth, caste, and gender. Concerning love, Swami Vivekananda once wrote as follows, "Love makes no distinction between man and man, between an Aryan and a Mlechchha, between a Brahmana and a Pariah, nor even between a man and a woman. Love makes the whole universe as one's own home."

I personally feel Swami Vivekananda had a particular compassion for those who were socially vulnerable, for I find such compassion revealed in many of his letters. For example, concerning the poor of his motherland, he expressed his feelings in a straightforward manner by saying, "Who



feels for them? They cannot find the light of education. Who will bring the light to them — who will travel from door to door bringing education to them? Let these people be your God — think of them, work for them, pray for them incessantly..." In another letter, he wrote, "I do not believe in a God or religion which cannot wipe the widow's tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth," and he further declared, "If you want any good to come, just throw your ceremonials overboard and worship the Living God, the Man-God—every being that wears a human form—God in His universal as well as individual aspect."

This humanism of Swami Vivekananda appears to be the outcome of his own experiences in India and the West, as well as the influences he received from the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and his personal study of western and Indian thought.

Vivekananda's Views on the Buddha

When dealing with the subject of Swami Vivekananda's humanism, I think it essential that we take into consideration his thoughts on the Buddha. There is an anecdote stating that he had a vision of the Buddha in his early childhood. Before his departure to the United States he went on

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Humanism (from page 8)

a pilgrimage to Bodhgaya, the city where the Buddha had attained enlightenment, and on meditating there he was impressed by the Buddha's compassion. Also, he had been reading early Buddhist scriptures like the *Dhammapadam* and *Suttanipadam*, and such episodes appear in his letters and other writings. He mentioned the Buddha often in his lectures and letters, and seemed to experience a deep sense of respect for him. On his way to the United States to participate in the World congress of religions that was held in Chicago in 1893, he stopped by in Japan, and mentioned in a letter that he had seen many temples. He must have experienced the pervading power and influence of Buddhism in the Far East, for during a lecture in Calcutta he declared, "When I was traveling through the Eastern parts of Asia, one thing especially struck me—that is the prevalence of Indian spiritual thought in Eastern Asiatic countries." Such experiences must have been factors that deepened his impressions of both the Buddha and Buddhism.

How did Vivekananda view the Buddha? He mentioned the Buddha in a lecture in London entitled "Absolute and manifestation," and said, "It was the great Buddha, who never cared for the dualistic gods, and who has been called an atheist and materialist, who yet was ready to give up his body for a poor goat." Also, in this lecture, while comparing the Buddha with Sankara, the Vedantic philosopher of Non-dualism, Vivekananda declared, "In Buddha we had the great, universal heart and infinite patience, making religion practical and bringing it to everyone's door." Such statements reveal that Vivekananda discovered in teachings of the Buddha "compassion for every being" and the importance of "its practice".

In the *Suttanipadam*, there is found the following description, "May all living creatures be happy, be at peace in security,

and be comfortable." I tend to believe that by praying for the happiness of others, Vivekananda did express the compassion that characterized the "heart" of the Buddha. Dr. Hajime Nakamura, the well-known scholar of Indian studies declared, "The ideal of Buddhism is 'mercy', but a merely warm consideration for others does not become mercy. It must be incarnated in real action, in service". As for the practice of service, Swami Vivekananda united the teachings of the Vedanta with the "heart" of the Buddha, and it may be said that he set forth a more aggressive idea with a sense of unity, where he served a person while worshipping him as God.

Humanism with Reference to Women

The humanism of Swami Vivekananda was especially directed towards women. In a letter he stated, "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved," and his ideal for establishing a nunnery and a school for girls was accordingly implemented.

When we visited the Belur math in January, we also looked in on the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Sister Nivedita School in Kolkata, founded in 1898, where girls from the first to tenth grade (primary school and secondary school) study. We dropped in on some of the classes and observed the students studying diligently under the guidance of nuns and female teachers, and it proved a really warm experience for us to carry out an exchange, through singing songs to each other. We observed the students praying and singing the Indian national anthem in the courtyard after school, and after the students had finished
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• Thought of the Month •

"I think we all have empathy. We may not have enough courage to display it."

- Maya Angelou

Humanism (from page 10)

their singing, we on our part contributed by singing a Japanese song, namely “Furusato (or hometown).” The students thereupon sang songs once again, and while taking photographs of the students, one of them grasped my hand and another gave me a small origami. Even though the time was brief it was an unforgettable experience for me, and my desire is that all those students acquire a wide education and grow to become smart young women, who play an active role in society as well as in their homes.

Conclusion

On observing the teachings of Swami Vivekananda, I find therein his humanism as well as his strength in putting that humanism into practice, and that may be the reason why many are charmed by his

teachings. I had a special motive in participating in the international seminar that was organized as the closing item of the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Swami Vivekananda, and that was to read out a paper written by the late Dr. Tsuyoshi Nara, who was professor emeritus of Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, and who sadly departed from this world two months ago. Dr. Nara had a profound love for the Bengali language and Indian culture, and here at the ICC too he taught the Bengali language and culture. I appreciated the opportunity to convey his message directly to the people of India, and I appreciate also this precious opportunity I have received today, to speak to all of you. I pray that Dr. Nara’s spirit may rest in peace, and I wish that the humanism of Swami Vivekananda, his “heart” of mercy that never discriminates against anyone will spread its influence far and wide, and be practiced all over the world. Thank you very much.

April Zushi Monthly Retreat 2014

On Sunday, April 20, the Vedanta Society of Japan held their monthly retreat at the Zushi Centre Main Ashrama from 11am. After chanting Vedic peace prayers, Swami Medhasananda took time to note the importance of this day among Christians before launching into the topic of discussion “The Practice of Karma Yoga.”

Swami noted it was a thrice blessed day because, “Firstly, Good Friday, Christ’s Crucifixion, was last Friday; his saddened followers waited in expectation on Saturday; and today, Sunday, he was resurrected. We can also take these purported events in a symbolic way as well, in that we must die to be born again in this life. Of course I do not mean we need to commit suicide. No, it means we have to die mentally to be born spiritually, or to die before death.” Then Swami asked that supporting verses from the Bible in the Book of John be read by a guest student and practicing Catholic from Argentina from a Japanese edition of the New Testament.

Swami then told of Sri Sarada’s grief at Sri Ramakrishna’s passing and his vision assuring her that he had only passed ‘from one room to another’ and that she therefore need not adopt the strict customs of Hindu widowhood related to behaviors, clothing and accessories.

After his talk on Karma Yoga, the congregation enjoyed a lunch prasad.

The afternoon session was cancelled in order to conduct a special meeting regarding observances for the passing of the Society’s long-serving Vice President and dear friend, Professor Tsuyoshi Nara. •

Vedanta Society Summer Retreat 2014

Topic: "The Practice of Karma Yoga"

July 19 ~ 21 at Kōyasan Shingon-shū

Sign up now! Email: info@vedanta.jp



スワミー・メーダサーナンダ 特別講話
カルマ・ヨーガの実践 *The practice of Karma Yoga*
働く本当の目的とその正しいやり方とは？

古来より神々が鎮まる聖地 高野山
この深山幽谷の神聖な場所を
スワミーと一緒に巡礼し
静かな時間を過ごしてはいかがですか？
初めての方もどうぞお気軽にご参加ください



インド哲学
Talk on Indian philosophy



瞑想
Outdoor Meditation



巡礼
Free time for pilgrimage

講師：スワミー・メーダサーナンダ師
日本ヴェーダーンタ協会会長
日本ヨーガ療法学会スピリチュアルアドバイザー
1974年ラマクリシュナ・ミッションの出家僧となり同団体の
ヴィディヤマンディール大学学長を経て、1993年より
日本ヴェーダーンタ協会会長を務める。
著書に『スワミー・ヴィヴェーカーナンダと日本』、誘導瞑想
チャンティングのCD等。毎月行われるインド大使館の
バガヴァッド・ギター講話の他、日本全国で講話を行う。



ヨーガ
Yoga



ヴェーダの祈り&賛歌
Vedic chanting
Devotional songs

2014年 7月19日(土)~7月21日(祝)



南院の本堂と中庭

弘法大師が自ら作られた「親切不動明王」を御本尊とする特別な密坊
【場所】高野山真言宗 [南院 Nanin]
住所: 〒648-0211 和歌山県伊都郡高野町高野山680
TEL: 0736-56-2534

• A Story to Remember •

Plastic Flowers, Plastic Mind

One Sunday, while Seung Sahn Soen-Sa was staying at the International Zen Center of New York, there was a big ceremony. Many Korean women came, with shopping bags full of food and presents. One woman brought a large bouquet of plastic flowers, which she smilingly presented to an American student of Soen-sa's. As quickly as he could, the student hid the flowers under a pile of coats. But soon another woman found them and, with the greatest delight, walked into the Dharma Room and put them in a vase on the altar.

The student was very upset. He went to Soen-sa and said, "Those plastic flowers are awful. Can't I take them off the altar and dump them somewhere?"

Soen-sa said, "It is your mind that is plastic. The whole universe is plastic." The student said, "What do you mean?"

Soen-sa said, "Buddha said, 'When one's mind is pure, the whole universe is pure; When one's mind is tainted, the whole universe is tainted.' Every day we meet people who are unhappy. When their minds are sad, everything they see, hear, smell, taste, and touch is sad, the whole universe is sad. When the mind is happy, the whole universe is happy. If you desire something, then you are attached to it. If you reject it, you are just as attached to it. Being attached to a thing means that it becomes a hindrance in your mind. So 'I don't like plastic' is the same as 'I like plastic'— both are attachments.

You don't like plastic flowers, so your mind has become plastic, and the whole universe is plastic. Put it all down. Then you won't be hindered by anything. You won't care whether the flowers are plastic or real, whether they are on the altar or in the garbage bin. This is true freedom. A plastic flower is just a plastic flower. A real flower is just a real flower. You mustn't be attached to name and form.

The student said, "But we are trying to make a beautiful Zen Center here, for all people. How can I not care? Those flowers spoil the whole room."

Soen-sa said, "If somebody gives real flowers to Buddha, Buddha is happy. If somebody else like plastic flowers and gives them to Buddha, Buddha is also happy. Buddha is not attached to name and form, he doesn't care whether the flowers are real or plastic, he only cares about the person's mind. These women who are offering plastic flowers have very pure minds, and their action is Bodhisattva action. Your mind rejects plastic flowers, so you have separated the universe into good and bad, beautiful and ugly. So your action is not Bodhisattva action. Only keep Buddha's mind. Then you will have no hindrance. Real flowers are good; plastic flowers are good. This mind is like the great sea, into which all waters flow— the Hudson River, the Charles River, the Yellow River, Chinese water, American water, clean water, dirty water, salt water, clear water. The sea doesn't say, 'Your water is dirty, you can't flow into me.' It accepts all waters and mixes them and all become sea. So if you keep the Buddha mind, your mind will be like the great sea. This is the great sea of enlightenment.

The student bowed deeply.

— Seung Sahn (1927-2004),
Dropping Ashes on the Buddha: The Teachings of Zen Master Seung Sahn

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