



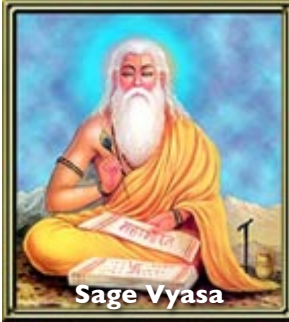
JUNE 2014 - Volume 12 Number 06

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

## JULY Calendar



Sage Vyasa

## Birthdays

### Guru Purnima

Saturday, 12 July

### Swami

Ramakrishnananda

Thursday, 24 July

## Kyokai Events

### • June Zushi Retreat •

**NEW DATE**  
**2nd Sunday in July**

13 July 10:30AM

### • Summer Retreat •

Wakayama Prefecture

**Mount Kōya Nannin**

At Kōyasan Shingon-shū

July 19~21

Talk by  
Swami Medhasananda

### "The Practice of Karma Yoga"

Address:

680 Koyasan,  
Koya, Ito District,  
Wakayama 648-0211

Contact Zushi Centre to  
Sign Up Today!



## ✧ Thus Spake ✧

*"Don't be afraid. Human birth is full of suffering and one has to endure everything patiently, taking the name of God. None, not even God in human form, can escape the sufferings of body and mind."*

- Sri Sarada Devi

*"No one should abandon duties because he sees defects in them. Every action, every activity, is surrounded by defects as a fire is surrounded by smoke."*

- Sri Krishna

## Swami Vivekananda's 150th Birth Anniversary Concluding Celebration Held in Japan

On Sunday, May 25, 2014, the Vedanta Society of Japan officially brought its exhaustive year-long calendar of events commemorating the 150th birth anniversary of Ramakrishna Math and Mission founder, Swami Vivekananda, to a concise and enthusiastic close. With the continued support of the Indian Embassy of Japan and in collaboration with Seisen University, the Closing Ceremony was held in Seisen's spacious auditorium with doors opening at 15:30. Admission was free.

For weeks prior Swami Medhasananda, President, Vedanta Society of Japan (Nippon Vedanta Kyokai) managed the teams of volunteers in planning the myriad of details involved in scheduling, preparing, delivering and setting up of so many items, including the many speaker translation overheads, spotlights, audio and video systems, table settings, special release packages, bouquets, etc., and of course, the musicians, dancers and singers perfecting their performances.

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**150th Close** (from page1)

In the foyer a provisional bookstore offering discounted Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature in both Japanese and English, an assortment of altar photographs, audio cassettes and CDs, incense, etc., was manned by multilingual volunteers. A photo exhibit covering all the Society's events and collaborations of the yearlong celebrations of Swamiji's 150th Birth Anniversary was also set up opposite the bookstore. A reception desk was centrally set up to provide each attendee with a programme, a special edition of the Society's magazine, 'The Universal Gospel, plus a copy of 'Arise and Awake,' a booklet compilation of Swamiji's inspiring messages and a copy of 'Anecdotes of the Life of Swami Vivekananda, both of the latter are bilingual editions.

Promptly at 16:00 the stage curtain opened to seated speakers center stage-right and -left; downstage-left a life-sized, framed, colour photo of Swami Vivekananda adorned with beautifully arranged bouquets stood; at upstage right the team of English- and Japanese- MCs began their introductions as a pair of swamis and pairs of male and female devotees dressed in kurta and sari bowed to the audience and to Swami Vivekananda, who then offered Vedic Peace Prayers to commence the event. Special bouquets were offered to all the guests by children of the Society, and special guest speaker Swami Suhitanandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Mission, was assisted by Swami Medhasananda in offering a bouquet to the portrait

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**Bouquet Offering**



**Guest Bouquets**





Swami Medhasanandaji Welcome

**150th Close** (from page 2)

photo of Swami Vivekananda, the ceremony's very special honoree.

At center stage-left sat special guest speakers, Smt. Deepa Goplan Wadhwa, Ambassador of India and Swami Suhitanandaji. The table opposite was shared by guest speaker Professor Sengaku Mayeda, Director, Hajime Nakamura Eastern Institute and Professor Emeritus, Tokyo University, and Swami Medhasananda. After the special guests were introduced, MCs Kathy Matsui of Seisen University (English) and Ms. Satsuki Yokota (Japanese) invited Swami Medhasananda to give the Welcome Address.

Swami's Address highlighted the many events and achievements of the year-long calendar of events held across the Japanese archipelago, including collaborations with the recently established Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of the Philippines and the newly formed Vedanta Society of South Korea. *[This speech is presented in its entirety in the June issue of The Vedanta*



Sister Shioya Welcome

*Kyokai newsletter.*] Sister Junko Shioya, Chairperson, Managing Board of Seisen University, next offered a brief welcome on behalf of Seisen University highlighting words from Swami Vivekananda that particularly impressed her and her thoughts on the need for religious ideas to help the peoples of Asia and the world over.

A message from Swami Atmasthanandaji, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission *[presented in the June issue of The Vedanta Kyokai newsletter]* was read by Swami Subhakarananda, who had accompanied Swami Suhitanandaji from Ramakrishna Math and Mission headquarters in Belur, India. Vedanta Society Secretary, Mr. Kenichi Mitamura, then read the message received by the Society from Japanese Prime Minister Shintaro Abe wishing the success of the Society's commemorative functions in Japan at the 150th launch in June 2013 *[See the June 2013 issue of The Vedanta Kyokai]*.

Next Swami Suhitanandaji was called upon to release a special book entitled,

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Suhitanandaji Release



Ambassdor Release



Medhasanandaji Release

### 150th Close (from page 3)

‘Anecdotes in the Life of Swami Vivekananda’ translated into Japanese. Ambassador Wadhwa then released a special issue of the Society’s bi-monthly magazine, *The Universal Gospel*. Professor Mayeda then released the Japanese language booklet, *Okakura Tenshin and Swami Vivekananda* and Swami Medhasananda released a new Japanese edition of *Karma Yoga*. Three speeches and several tributes were then offered.

The first speaker was Her Excellency Smt. Deepa Gopalan Wadhwa, Ambassador of India, who greeted the audience and all distinguished guests and shared two main thoughts on the Celebration. Firstly, she wondered if “the celebrations of the life of one of the greatest savants of modern times can ever really conclude,” and was pleased that Swami Medhasananda had agreed with her on this point. She went on to note Swamiji’s accomplishments in uplifting his nation, while at the same time expounding “incontrovertible beliefs appealing to the highest sensibilities of all mankind.” These included absolute “respect for the religions of others.” This led to her second point, saying she was struck by the multi-religious nature of the gathering and cited Swamiji’s role in fostering, “tolerance and mutual understanding in the world.” She then quoted Swamiji again, “I accept all religions that were in the past, and worship with them all; I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedan; I shall enter the



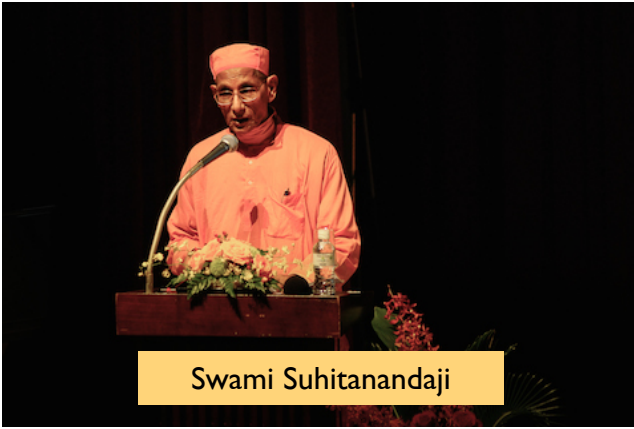
Prof. Maeda Release

Christian’s church and kneel before the crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhist temple, where I shall take refuge in the Buddha and in his Law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu, who is trying to see the Light that enlightens the heart of everyone.” Ambassador Wadhwa also noted that Swamiji had envisaged close links between Japan and India based on the “common cultural values and beliefs” before her concluding salutations.

Dr. Sengaku Mayeda was then introduced. Professor Mayeda has an extensive academic curriculum vitae. After graduation from Tokyo University and a Ph.D from Pennsylvania University he became a professor of Indian Philosophy at Tokyo University until retirement in 1991. He currently serves as President of Nakamura Hajime Eastern Institute in Tokyo. His talk was on time spent in India with his young family and the interesting, meetings, travels and research on Sri Shankara that led to introspection on Swami Vivekananda. The professor concluded his remarks by quoting the iconic speech Swamiji gave on September 11, 1893 at the first World Parliament of Religions in Chicago addressing the audience; “Sisters and Brothers of America ...” [*Professor Mayeda’s complete remarks will be presented in the August Issue of ‘The Vedanta Kyokai’ newsletter.*]

Next Revered Swami Suhitanandaji was invited to address the assembly. After offering greetings to the many dignitaries in attendance, he offered his profound thanks

(con’t page 5)



**150th Close** (from page 4)

to the Japanese devotees for taking such great and loving care of ‘our’ brother monk Swami Medhasanda. *[The full text of Swami Suhitanandaji’s prepared comments will be presented in the July issue of ‘The Vedanta Kyokai.’]* He then told of a brief hospital stay wherein he got the book entitled ‘Ideals of the East: The Spirit of Japanese Art’ written by Kakuzo Okakura (Tenshin) and he reflected on some of the points Tenshin makes and tied them in with the ideals and the early connections of the Ramakrishna Mission. Suhitanandaji then pursued the relevance of Swami Vivekananda 150 years after his birth and offered brief descriptions of Swamiji’s contributions in the crucial fields of harmony, human society, religion, service and peace. He then quoted several world thinkers on the impact Swamiji had on them, before closing his remarks.

Several distinguished guests were then asked to give a few remarks on Swami Vivekananda, first was a message by His Excellency Masud Bin Momen of Ambassador of Bangladesh, who was unable to attend, read in his stead by Bangladeshi and 150th Celebration Committee member, Mr. Sukhen Brahma.

This was followed by His Excellency Madan Kumar Bhattarai, Ambassador of Nepal offering a brief summary on that which impressed him most about Swamiji. In closing he noted that as one who had visited Belur Math often, he said that the Ramakrishna Mission founded by Swamiji

“stands as testimony to the monumental contributions this great icon made to the world.”

Next Swami Sadyojaatah of the ‘Art of Living’ Foundation began by chanting a vedic peace prayer. He then stated that life is a complex gift to us and offered some examples saying that Swami Vivekananda’s teachings are most valuable for the youth of the world as they offer eternal solutions. ‘He has left the young with a dream, and if we carry this dream in our hearts, there is no other way than progress in the world.’ The swami noted that Indian philosophy was once considered superstition and that Vivekananda presented these ideas with a practical and scientific approach, giving them their rightful place in the world. He went on to say that in the traditions of Vedanta, Yoga and Sanatana Dharma lie all the solutions for the problems and ills of today’s world.

The Reverend Hakuei Yamaguchi of the Nounin-ji Temple in Chiba followed. The Reverend spoke as if addressing Swami Vivekananda himself. He began by offering his heartfelt gratitude to Swamiji for having inspired and encouraged him to this very day. Having experienced the transience of life at 18 years old, he read a quote from the Buddha stating: “I alone am honored in heaven and on earth” and decided to renounce the world and become a Zen monk. He then told of meeting an ascetic monk who introduced him to Swamiji’s message. He confessed that although he did not accept Swamiji at that time, he

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Attentive Audience

### 150th Close (from page 5)

later came to appreciate and even developed a firm belief that Swamiji “never ceased to shower” his “divine protection” on him. Reverend Yamaguchi said that Swamiji’s words that have most fortified him are: “I do not believe in reform. I believe in the enhancement of the spirit.” He stated that Swamiji was indeed a “Great Bodhisattva of Mahayana Buddhism” and asked for Vivekananda’s continued blessings in reaching worth goals and aspirations.

Next Father Cyril Veliath, a Jesuit Father and professor at Sophia University in Tokyo, greeted all and noted he first read of Swami Vivekananda as a university student and was amazed to learn Swamiji had translated a few paragraphs of the 15th century ‘Imitation of Christ’ into Bengali. He praised Swamiji’s dedication to the idea that “religion should not remain as something theoretical or abstract.” He then quoted His Holiness Pope Francis speaking on the suffering of millions: “Human rights are violated not only by terrorism, repression, or assassination, but also by unfair economic structures that create huge inequalities.” Father Veliath then said that the Pope’s words echo the wisdom of Swami Vivekananda who more than 100 years earlier in Chicago said: “Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled it with violence, drenched it with blood, destroyed



Vedanta/Kailas Chorus

civilizations, and sent entire nations to despair. Had it not been for these demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now.” He ended his remarks saying the world today needs the miracle of more people like Swami Vivekananda.

The last speaker was Mr. Ryuko Hira of the Institute of Sathya Sai Education and the Honorary President of the Indian Chamber of Commerce. He began his remarks by stating what an honour it was to be the last speaker on this occasion. He offered his “loving and prayerful salutations on behalf of the ISSE’s teachers at the Divine Lotus Feet of Swami Vivekananda. He told a little of his involvement and support with projects of the Vedanta Society of Japan. Regarding education he quoted Swamiji, “Vidya (correct knowledge) without Sradha (perseverance) is futile” saying that while present day Japanese youth misplace their Sradha resulting in weakness and loss of faith in themselves. To rebuild a stronger Japan, Vidya with Sradha is the only way to success for the youth.

At the close of Mr. Hira’s remarks the MCs announced a ten-minute tea break and urged all 400 attendees to take advantage of the discounts at the bookstore in the auditorium foyer while the stage was being prepared for the cultural programme. Tea or chai, provided by Mr. Jagmohan Chandrani of Spice Magic Calcutta, was served in the lower foyer.

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**150th Close** (from page 3)

The audience was still taking their seats when the curtains opened to combined group of devotees from the Vedanta Society and members of the Kailas Yoga School of Yokohama. Led by Ms. Shanti Izumida on grand piano with Dinesh Chandra Dyoundi on tabla, the group sang Ramakrishna Saranam. When the song came to an end the stage was cleared for a performance by an Indian classical dance troupe of five led by Ms. Kazuko Yasunobu of Studio Odissi in Tokyo.

At the conclusion of their Odissi performance Mr. Jagmohan Chandrani, Secretary, Celebration Committee, was then called upon to offer the Vote of Thanks as the stage was being prepared for the next performance. He acknowledged that all good things must come to a close and thanked all for their support and participation. He



thanked an impressive list of distinguished guests and speakers of all the programmes and the many volunteers who contributed so much to the success of the Society's ambitious yearlong calendar of events.

At the conclusion of Mr. Chandrani's brief remarks the house curtains opened once again. This time the stage was set for a sitar recital with Mr. Amit Roy on sitar, Pandit Lalit Kumar Dixit on tabla and Mr. Mizuta Takanori on tampingura. Mr. Roy selected the melodic classical Hindustani raga 'Tilik Kamod' for their 20-minute performance. The audience applauded enthusiastically as the raga came to its conclusion.

Finally, as the curtain closed, the MCs urged everyone to pick up a snack, also provided by Spice Magic Calcutta, on their way out of the auditorium. •

### **Message from Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji President, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission**

April 26, 2014

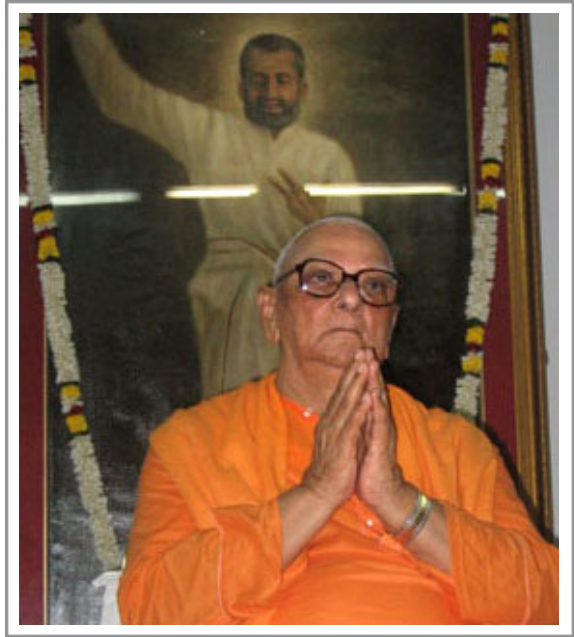
I am happy to know that the Nippon Vedanta Kyokai of Japan is going to release a special number of the Kyokai's bi-monthly magazine "The Universal Gospel" on the occasion of the concluding celebrations of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda to be held at Seisen Women's University, Tokyo, on May 25, 2014.

Based upon the unshakeable foundation of direct experience, Swami Vivekananda propounded the idea of "Harmony of Religions," which he got from his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, irrespective of

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**President's Message** (from page 7)

race, religion or sex. He saw humanity marching as a whole towards a higher spiritual goal. Though he recognised the differences in human temperament, in spite of this he said that all the religious paths lead to the same ultimate destination. In one of his lectures Swamiji said, "If there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will have no location in place or time; which will be infinite line the God it will preach, and whose sun with shine upon the followers of Krishna and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike; which will no be Brahminic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of these, and still have infinite space for development ..."



My earnest prayer to Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda is to shower their choicest blessings on all of you and hope the magazine will help to disseminate the universal and eternal message of the Holy Trio in Japan.

Swami Atmasthananda  
President  
Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission

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**Swami Vivekananda 150th Birth Anniversary Closing Ceremony**  
**25 May 2014 - Seisen University Auditorium, Tokyo, Japan**

**Welcome Address**  
by Swami Medhasananda

Dear Friends, by using analogies of nature, we may describe that Swami Vivekananda's first appearance on the world stage in 1893 was sudden like a comet causing a tremendous sensation; since then his message has been illuminating and energising many souls steeped in ignorance and weakness was like the shining sun; his ideas providing a means of attaining harmony to the divergent elements of the world was like the indivisible sky above; and, finally, Vivekananda shines like a polestar, guiding hu-

manity that has lost its way, onto the right path. Consequently, his impact, sometimes vibrant, and at other times silent, has been bringing about a transformation in the realm of thoughts, not only in India, but the whole world as well.

His unique contribution is now being recognised publically and privately by the peoples of many countries, including Japan, on the occasion of the celebration of his

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## Welcome Address (from page 8)

150th birth anniversary. In Japan this anniversary has been observed for one continuous year, coming to an end today with this closing ceremony.

Dear friends, of behalf of the Organising Committee instituted by the Vedanta Society of Japan, a branch of the Ramakrishna Mission headquartered in India, and myself, I heartily welcome you all to this closing celebration.

We feel blessed by the holy presence of Revered Swami Suhitanandaji, General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, whose participation today in spite of his busy schedule has made us immensely happy and inspired. We cordially welcome him and look forward to his comments concerning Swamiji.

We are also very happy that Her Excellency Smt. Deepa Gopalan Wadhwa, Ambassador of India, has graced this occasion as our Chief Guest. While organising the various programmes and events of our year-long celebration of Swamiji's 150th birth anniversary, the Indian Embassy, under the leadership of Her Excellency, has been our constant support and inspiration. We cordially welcome your Excellency.

We also cordially welcome Professor Sen-gaku Mayeda, President of the Hajime Nakamura Eastern Institute and Professor Emeritus of Indian Philosophy, at the University of Tokyo. Professor Mayeda is a distinguished scholar who has been recently awarded the prestigious Padmashree Award of India in the field of Literature and Education, and we are honoured to have him as a main speaker today.

Just as Gautama Buddha is not only for Buddhists, or Jesus Christ only for Christians, or even Hazrat Muhammad only for Muslims, they are for all and collectively the most precious of the heritage of all humankind in comparison to any material heritage. Similarly, Vivekananda, though a

Hindu monk born in India, is also for all. On the occasion of Swami Vivekananda's 150th Birth Anniversary celebrated around the world, we have observed that people of all ages, professions, faiths and countries of the East and West have gathered to pay homage to the hallowed memory of Swamiji who inspired them.

Although today's gathering is not that large, people of various backgrounds and different nationalities have assembled here to take part in our programme and we heartily welcome them all. Tributes to Swamiji will also be offered by distinguished guests from various stations of life and belonging to various faiths today, including; H.E. Madan Kumar Bhattarai, Ambassador of Nepal; Reverend Hakuei Yamaguchi of the Nounin-ji Temple of Chiba Prefecture; Father Cyril Veliath, a Jesuit Priest and Professor at Sophia University, Tokyo, and one of the most enthusiastic and resourceful members of our Celebration Organising Committee; Swami Sadyojaatah of the "Art of Living Foundation" headquartered in India, and Mr. Ryuko Hira, Chairperson, Managing Board, Institute of Sathya Sai Education and Honorary President of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Japan.

Celebration of this event in Japan is of special significance. As you may be aware, Swamiji had visited this country on his way to attending the first World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, where he made his historic appearance giving a spectacular speech on religious harmony. He had a profound love and appreciation of Japan, its people and culture, and wanted his countrymen, especially its youth, to imbibe some of the sterling qualities he had ob-

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### • Thought of the Month •

"As a child of God, I am greater than anything that can happen to me."

- A. P. J. Abdul Kalam

## Welcome Address (from page 9)

served of the Japanese.

Okakura Tenshin, the famous art critic and savant of Japan had gone to India to invite Swamiji to revisit Japan and stayed with him for a certain period of time in 1902. But many are not aware that the first foreigner who had lived in the monastery at Belur Math, our headquarters, under the personal care of Swami Vivekananda, like a brahmachari to study Sanskrit, for about five months and later lived in the Brahmacharya Ashram of Santiniketan under the personal care of Rabindranath Tagore, was a young Japanese named Shitoku Hori who had accompanied Okakura to India and was loved dearly by both Swamiji and Tagore.

Swamiji could not revisit Japan though invited by some distinguished Japanese, including the celebrated Meiji Emperor. That Japan occupied his mind on even on the last day of his mortal existence is revealed in his following significant remark on July 4, 1903, "I want to do something for Japan" he declared.

Swamiji's visit to Japan and Okakura's, as well as Shitoku Hori's, visit to India laid the foundation of a bridge between Japan and India in Modern times with far reaching consequences, further strengthened by the poet Rabindranath Tagore and other prominent Indians and Japanese.

Present day Japan is in urgent need of regaining self confidence; of setting out goals to reach for both the individual and the national life; and to start working towards reaching them as Prime Minister Abe observed in his message sent to us on the oc-

casional of the Opening Ceremony of the this 150th Birth Anniversary. In this regard, Vivekananda's inspiring messages of self-confidence, peace and harmony based on moral and spiritual values can be of tremendous importance to the Japanese.

Hence the organising committee planned an ambitious year-long calendar of events throughout Japan to familiarise residents with Swamiji's ideas, adopting various programmes and projects, most of which, in spite of our limited resources, have been implemented. I now offer a brief summary of these events as follows:



The Opening Ceremony of the Celebration was held at the Indian Embassy Auditorium on the 9th of June 2013, and H.E. Smt. Deepa Gopalan Wadhwa also graced that occasion as the Chief Guest. Swami Atmajnananandaji of the Vedanta Society of Washington D. C. and Professor Yasuaki Nara, and eminent scholar, were main speakers. Highlights of the Cultural Programme included a compilation of songs, narrations, a video-show, etc., on the

'Love of Vivekananda' under the direction of Mr. Ranjan Gupta.

A similar programme was held later in Osaka for people in the Kansai area on the 30th of November 2013. Among the main speakers were Mr. Aseem R. Mahajan, Consul General of India for Osaka-Kobe; Mr. J. S. Dayal, President of the Indian Chamber of Commerce; Mr. Keishin Kimura, President of the Japan Yoga Therapy Association; and Professor Akio Tanabe of Kyoto University. Another programme was held in Kumamoto for the people of the island of Kyushu on the 12th of April 2014. The main

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## **Welcome Address** (from page 10)

speakers were Mr. Takashi Masaki, a distinguished author and peace activist and Swami Medhasananda.

An exhibition highlighting the historical Japan-India relationship and the life and message of Swami Vivekananda was organised at the Indian Fair called 'Namaste India' in Yoyogi Park in Tokyo September 28th and 29th, 2013 and inaugurated by former Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori. This exhibit was again installed and inaugurated by Her Excellency Ambassador Wadhwa at the Indian Embassy Art Gallery and open to the public from the 3rd to the 6th of April 2014 drawing a large number of viewers.

A seminar on Swami Vivekananda and Okakura Tenshin was also hosted by the Indian Embassy on the 26th of March 2014, chiefly in collaboration with the Vedanta Society of Japan, but also in cooperation with 'Discover India' and 'Tagore 150.' Her Excellency Ambassador Wadhwa offered 'Opening Remarks' and speakers included Swami Tyagananda of the Vedanta Society of Boston, Swami Medhasananda of Japan, Dr. Kuniko Hirano of Sophia University, Tokyo, Dr. Kana Tomizawa of Tokyo University and Professor Takashi Okakura, the great grandson of Okakura Tenshin.

The Society also distributed winter garments and fruit among the destitute, who Swamiji taught us should be looked upon as gods and be served accordingly.

The Society published four books and a DVD related to Swamiji. It also published two special issues of its bimonthly magazine in Japanese with many thoughtful articles and photos. The Society also published and distributed hundreds of inspiring and informative books related to Swamiji in Japanese among the people on the occasions noted earlier and have also arranged to distribute these books to educational institutions and public libraries in collaboration with Embassy of India.

It is heartening to observe that the aim of all the activities summarised above to acquaint the people of this country with the elevating ideas of Swamiji, so that they can get guidance from him in leading an ideal life of wisdom, strength and peace, has been more or less fulfilled by the concerted efforts of so many and, above all, by the grace of Swamiji.

It would not be out of place to also mention our Vedanta Society collaborated with the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of the Philippines and the Vedanta Society of Korea who both celebrated the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swamiji in a grand way in Manila and Seoul respectively last year.

The purpose of these collaborations was to help spread the life-giving message in the countries of Asia that deserves the special attention of our organisation. In both of these programmes the local Indian Ambassador joined other distinguished guest speakers. At the Manila event Mr. Fidel Ramos, former President of the Philippines and Swami Bodhasarananda, then President of the Advaita Ashrama of India, a branch of the Ramakrishna Mission, both spoke.

Here I would like to mention here, with a heavy heart, that Professor Tsuyoshi Nara, a celebrated scholar and humanist, as well as Vice-President of this Celebration's Organising Committee, passed away in January of this year. We recall, with a deep sense of appreciation and gratitude, Professor Nara's invaluable contributions to spreading the message of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Vedanta in this country.

Ceremonially today we close our extensive year-long calendar of programmes on Swamiji. But it is not really an ending, but the beginning of a new phase of continued study, propagation and practice of Swamiji's teachings with greater energy and enthusiasm.

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## **Welcome Address** (from page 11)

I conclude my welcome speech with the following comment: The history of the Modern World has shown that Capitalism has failed, the experiment with Communism has also been unsuccessful, and now, together, we have to move forward to an era of pluralism and harmonism. Swami Vivekananda was the champion of these spirits. Not only was Swamiji an advocate of harmony in all areas of individual and collective life, but he also provides us a philosophy of harmony. This is based on the unity of existence in the plane of consciousness as postulated by Vedanta philosophy of India, which is ancient, yet profound, universal and harmonistic.

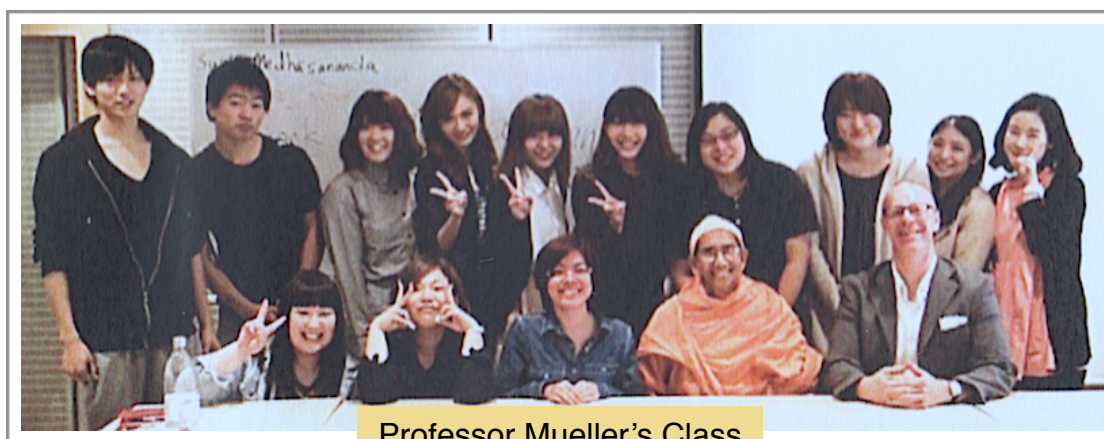
Thus, both as citizens of a given country, but also as global citizens, we need both Vivekananda and Vedanta today to give practicality to the 'One World Concept' by bringing about the psychological unity of the conflict-ridden world - which is now merely physically united. Because there is no better option to respond to the challenges of effectively interacting among the peoples of the world, brought to each other's close proximity by the advanced technologies of today, than cultivating the spirit of harmony and pluralism.

Finally, I again heartily welcome you all to this celebration and pray to Swami Vivekananda to shower his blessings on all of us.

Thank you! Arigatou gozaimashita! •

## **News Briefs:**

- Kevin Mueller, Associate Professor at Tokyo International University in Saitama, invited Swami Medhasananda to give a talk on Hinduism for students of his class on World Religions on May 7, 2014 again this year. Thirteen students attended the swami's talk on Hinduism and Swami Vivekananda. As the Vedanta Society's yearlong calendar of events celebrating Swami Vivekananda's 150th birth anniversary was coming to a formal close on May 25, each student was also given a copy of 'Swami Vivekananda, the Friend of All' an English language booklet published by the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture in India and the Japanese language booklet the Vedanta Society of Japan had published to introduce Swami Vivekananda and his message to the general public and youth of Japan, 'Vivekananda's Message'.



Professor Mueller's Class

- Swami Medhasananda also visited Sophia University in Tokyo on May 19, 2014. Father Cyril Veliath had invited him again this year to address students of his class on Indian Thought and Culture. About 40 attended the swami's discussion of Indian Philosophy and introduction to Swami Vivekananda and his message. Each of these students were also given copies of the books noted in Tokyo International University story above.

## • A Story to Remember •

### Shoan and His Mother

Shoan became a teacher of Soto Zen. When he was still a student his father passed away, leaving him to care for his old mother.

Whenever Shoan went to a meditation hall he always took his mother with him. Since she always accompanied him, when he visited monasteries he could not stay with the monks. So he would build a little shelter and care for her there. He would copy sutras, Buddhist verses and such, and in this manner receive a few coins for food.

When Shoan bought fish for his mother, the people would scoff at him, for a monk is not supposed to eat fish. But Shoan did not mind. His mother, however, was hurt to see the others laugh at her son. Finally she told Shoan: "I think I will become a nun. I can be a vegetarian too." She did, and they studied together.

Shoan was fond of music and was a master of the harp, which his mother also played. On full-moon nights they used to play together.

One night a young lady passed by their house and heard music. Deeply touched, she invited Shoan and his mother to visit her the next evening and play. He accepted the invitation. A few days later he met the young lady on the street and thanked her for her hospitality. Others laughed at him, for he had visited the house of a poor woman of the streets.

One day Shoan left for a distant temple to deliver a lecture. A few months afterwards he returned to find his mother had since passed away. Friends had not known where to reach him, so the funeral was then in progress.

Shoan walked up and hit the coffin with his staff. "Mother, your son has returned," he said.

"I am glad to see you have returned, son," he answered for his mother.

"Yes, I am glad too," Shoan responded. Then he announced to the people gathered about him: "The funeral ceremony is over. You may now bury the body."

When Shoan had grown old, he knew his end was fast approaching. He asked his disciples to gather around him in the morning, telling them he was going to pass on at noon. Burning incense before the picture of his mother and his old teacher, he wrote a poem:

For fifty-six years I lived as best I could,  
Making my way in this world.  
Now the rain has ended, the clouds are clearing,  
The blue sky has a full moon.

His disciples gathered about him, reciting a sutra, and Shoan passed on during the invocation.

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