



the VEDANTA Kyokai

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

✧ Thus Spake ✧

“Strength is life, weakness is death; strength is felicity, life eternal, immortal! Weakness is constant strain and misery. Weakness is death. Let positive, strong, helpful thoughts enter your brains from very childhood.” ... Swami Vivekananda

“Make truth, self-restraint and good acts your lines, and the utterances of the Name, your absolutions” ... Guru Nanak

Monthly Calendar:

• Birthdays •

*Swami Subodhananda
Sunday - November 13*

*Swami Vijnanananda
Tuesday - November 15*

• Kyokai Events •

*November Retreat
Zushi Center
Sunday, November 20
All, with family and friends
are welcome*

** Akhanda Japam
27 November 5 a.m. to 8 p.m.*



KALI PUJA CELEBRATED AT ZUSHI

The Nippon Vedanta Kyokai (Vedanta Society of Japan) observed Kali Puja on November 1, at its Zushi Centre.

Given that the puja was held on a Tuesday evening, the turnout was quite impressive. Between 90 and 100 devotees made the journey out to Zushi after their working day, many with children in tow. While the majority of the attendees for this special event were Indian, the Japanese contingent was well

represented, handling many of the decorating and preparatory activities necessary to accommodate so many visitors.

One such volunteer had come all the way from Okinawa.



This reporter had left Zushi Station after a brief stop at the fruit sellers, some time after

sunset, arriving at the bottom of the hill were the taxis drop off their fares at about 6:15. Ascending the broad concrete stairway to the 'Kyokai', as we call the main Zushi campus, I

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KALI PUJA (from page 1)

broke into a smile as I was greeted by strings of colored lights adorning the entrance portico cheerfully shining and blinking into the darkening sky.

Although the puja was scheduled to begin at 7:00, the broad 'genkan' (entrance) was already filled with shoes and sounds of a myriad activities and children at play. Upstairs all the sliding doors (fusuma) had been removed - those along the hallway serving as entrances to the meeting room and those to the main shrine, as well as the fusuma that normally separate these two rooms. An altar or shrine to Mother Kali had been set up at the back of the shrine room facing out to the opened-up meeting room. This layout would accommodate the greatest number, allowing

attendees to sit and observe the puja from the hall, the meeting room or the main shrine room.

A broad red cloth had been fixed to the wall, and in front of this a table draped in ochre and a red facing cloth served as an altar on which a photo of Kali Ma of Dakshineswar was installed. She was adorned in a lei of red flowers and on either side flower bouquets and trays of standing candles. At Her feet and in front of the altar lay trays, baskets and plates of offerings of flowers, fruits, candies and the various articles and vessels used for worship.

While the removal of the fusuma had opened the space nicely, TV monitors in the hall and in the meeting room, served by a camera facing out upon the worship area, had also been set up. This proved to

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MUSIC PROGRAMME:

KALIKIRTAN
DEVOTIONAL SONGS

SITAR & TABLA
RECITAL

Swami Medhasananda leads the congregation in singing devotional songs to Mother.



Gopal Krishnan Shah (sitar) and Dinesh Chadra Dyoundi (tabla) entertain Mother and guests.

KALI PUJA (from page 2)

be a wonderful innovation, allowing all to view the many details of the worship with relative ease.

Mr. Sudeb Chattopadhyay served as 'tantradharak' (assistant) as Swami Medhasananda performed the worship. At the close volunteers passed out prepared flowers and leaves and all were invited to partake in 'pushpanjali' (offering of flowers) to the Mother. This was followed by Kalikirtan (devotional songs) led by the swami on harmonium.

As an additional treat, a brief concert was performed by visiting Indian sitarist, Gopal Krishnan Shah and Japan resident and tabla instructor, Dinesh Chadra Dyoundi, on tabla. Due to time limitations this portion of the programme

was shorter than most may have wished, but there were many people to feed and tables had to be set up in the meeting room and hall, as well as the main dining area downstairs. A delicious prasad dinner, prepared by Ms. Rita Kar, Ms. Papiya Banerjee, Mr. Tushar Basu and several others, was then served. There was much laughter and fun during the meal.

After dinner, the gathering offered their respects (pranams) to the swami and farewell greetings to each other as they began dispersing in groups of friends or families, on foot, by car and taxi, as several volunteers continued various clean-up activities. I had long retired to bed when the last group of Japanese devotees could be heard loading a truck with articles to be taken over to Holy Mother's House. •

- Editor

Summary Report

Swami Medhasananda's Visit to India

- On September 26, Swami gave an address, based on his study of the 19th century history of Varanasi, at Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi. The talk was organised by Professor Devidas Nanda of the Political Science Department in collaboration with the Head of the History Department, and attended by students and staff of the Political Science, History and Sociology departments.

- Swami later visited Poet and Educationist Rabin-dranath Tagore's Viswa Bharati University in West Bengal, where he met some friends, acquaintances and students studying Japanese and gave a talk on Japanese culture and language. Professor Soumen Maitra and Mr. Narayan Mandal of Viswa Bharati made all arrangements for the swami's visit there from 28-30 September. Swami also visited the local Sri Ramakrishna Ashram, a private ashram in Bolpur, and gave a talk on Vedanta in Japan.

- On October 6, Swami gave a special lecture, sponsored by an endowment, at the Ramakrishna Institute of Culture, the internationally renowned centre of

culture located in Calcutta. Of interest to both scholars and laymen alike, the talk was on new findings related to 19th century Varanasi that he had uncovered during his studies of the city. An introductory commentary was given by Swami Prahanandaji, Secretary of the Institute, to an audience of some 600 persons.

- The swami also visited the holy sites associated with Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi at Kamar-pukur and Jayrambati.

- He later attended an annual Monastic Heads of Centres Conference on the 22nd and 23rd of October at Belur Math along with 125 others.

- From the 25-27 of October, Swami attended a General Conference of Monks with some 500 monks from various centres of the Order. Normally held each three years, this was the first such conference held in 4 years. (See group photo on page 6 of this issue) •

Deemed-to-be-University at Belur Inaugurated

"The spiritual impact that has come to Belur [Math] will last fifteen hundred years, and it will be a great university. Do not think I imagine it; I see it." ... Swami Vivekananda, July 2, 1902.

The Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute (RKMVERI) was formally inaugurated a 'deemed-to-be-university' at a ceremony at Vivekananda Sabhagar, Belur Math, on July 4, 2005, the anniversary of Swamiji's mahasamadi.

This event has received much excited praise and speculation, especially in the press. It has been called the culmination of many long years of effort by Swami Vivekananda's followers and admirers, however, the designation as a 'deemed-to-be-university' represents only the barest beginnings of a monumental project that's form, function and significance are yet to evolve.

The initial concept of the institute is to focus on teaching disability management; integrated rural development, including tribal development; Indian spiritual and cultural heritage; and value education and disaster management, including relief and rehabilitation.

We offer below just a sampling of Swami Vivekananda's ideas on education:

"Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas." ... Swami Vivekananda

"The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion - is it worth the name? Real education is that which enables one to stand on one's own legs." ... Swami Vivekananda

"Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man." ... Swami Vivekananda

"What a man 'learns' is really what he 'discovers'." ... Swami Vivekananda

What exactly had the swami envisioned for Belur? What form would such a centre of learning take? Some argue that Swamiji had a physical university surrounding Belur Math in mind. In recent years, education via 'distance learning' and the 'open university' concept have gained acceptance, while functioning centers of applied and research education under the auspices of the Ramakrishna Order have also evolved. These factors, that have transpired since Swami Vivekananda uttered his words, have provided some practical means to move forward with the deemed-to-be-university's concept and founding.

The Indian Government designation 'deemed-to-be-university' is a special provision allowed under Section 3 of the University Grants Commission Act of 1956. And while the prospects are exciting, it is too early to declare that Swami Vivekananda's 'vision has been realized' and that the 'Vivekananda University' has been established. It may be more accurate to say that some of Swami Vivekananda's ideas on education, such as bringing education to the masses, can be moved forward by the 'deemed-to-be-university' concept.

While we are all certainly enthusiastic about the possibilities and wish the project Godspeed, we must caution that there is much work to be done before any enrollment process can begin at Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute.

- editor

Important Announcements:

- *Akhanda Japam (Continuous Spiritual Practice) is scheduled for 27 November from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. at Zushi. Those wishing to participate should contact the Centre as soon as possible.*
- *We regret that our report on Swami Medhasananda's talks at the Outdoor Retreat in Yamanashi-Prefecture has been delayed and is rescheduled for our December issue. - editor*

A Story to Remember

THE FISHERMAN AND THE INDUSTRIALIST

A rich industrialist from the north was horrified to find a fisherman of the south laying lazily beside his boat, smoking a pipe.

"Why aren't you fishing?" asked the industrialist.

"Because I've caught enough fish for today." was the reply.

"Why don't you go out and catch more?"

"What would I do with more fish?" replied the fisherman.

"You could earn more money" was the reply. "With more money you could have a motor fixed to your boat to go into deeper waters and catch even more fish."

"Yes, I suppose I could do that," pondered the fisherman.

"Then you would make enough money to buy strong nylon nets," he continued.

"Nylon nets?" he questioned.

"Yes, these would bring in even more fish and more money. Soon you would have enough money to own two boats," he enthused, "... maybe even a fleet of boats. Then you would be a rich man, like me."

"What would I do then?" asked the fisherman.

"Why, then you could really enjoy life," he explained.

"And what do you think I'm doing now?" he grinned. •

THOUGHT OF THE MONTH

Believe nothing just because a so-called wise person said it. Believe nothing just because a belief is generally held. Believe nothing just because it is said in ancient books. Believe nothing just because it is said to be of divine origin. Believe nothing just because someone else believes it. Believe only what you yourself test and judge to be true. – Pascal



Above: 1. The entrance portico is lit up for Kali Puja.

2. Devotees gather for start of the Puja.

Below: Over 500 monks attending a conference at Belur Math pose for a photo on the steps of Sri Ramakrishna Temple.



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