



The Vedanta Kyokai

News, Updates and Miscellany from the Vedanta Society of Japan

June 2003

Volume 1 Number 3

Thus Spake...

"Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divine 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"

...Swami Vivekananda

"Verily, God is pure and loves the pure; is clean and loves the clean; is beneficent and loves the beneficent; is generous and loves the generous."

...Prophet Muhammad

Talk Given at Osaka Ayurveda Seminar

Swami Medhasananda was invited to address the 2nd International Seminar of Ayurveda in Japan during the second day of the Osaka session held on May 5th at the International House, Osaka, conference center.

During the morning's session, the swami provided insights to relation between body, mid and soul. The talk was well received by a capacity crowd about 150.

Commencing and ending his session with the offering of Vedic peace prayers - copies of which had been prepared and circulated with Japanese translation and phonetic reading - an enthusiastic audience joined in as the swami led the chants.

Coming Events...

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: 141st Birth Anniversary

Date:

Sunday, June 22, 2pm - 5:30pm

Venue:

Toshima-Kohkaido (Public Hall)
1-19-1 Higashi-Ikebukuro
Toshima-ku, Tokyo

Panel Discussion:

Swami Vivekananda's Message
in the Context of Insecurity in Modern Life

Panelists:

Professor Cyril Veliath, Sophia University
Professor Kathy R. Matsui, Seisen University
Mr. Kenichiro Toyofuku

Coordinator:

Professor Tsuyoshi Nara

Master of Ceremonies:

Ms. Kuniko Hirano

Release of the Universal Gospel

(Special Issue) and speech:

His Excellency Mr. Aftab Seth
Ambassador of India

The programme also includes a short guided meditation, devotional songs by Japanese and Indian devotees and a video presentation on Swami Vivekananda.

ADMISSION IS FREE!

*ALL, WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS, ARE
CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND!*

For further details, please call:

Nippon Vedanta Kyokai at
(046) 873-0428

May Retreat Fetes Lord Buddha

On Sunday, May 18, the Vedanta Society of Japan held its monthly retreat at the Zushi Centre honouring the birth and message of Gautama Buddha.

This month's programme featured a special talk entitled "Gautama Buddha and Sri Ramakrishna" by Chancellor Yasuaki Nara of Komazawa University. As a student of Buddhism and Indology, Chancellor Nara had visited Ramakrishna Mission Centres on many occasions while conducting research studies at Kolkatta University and later visits. He would later go on to head his own temple as its priest and become the first Japanese to write a biography on Sri Ramakrishna.

Chancellor Nara began his remarks by pointing out that due to prevalence of western influences in Japanese media, the youth of Japan tend to be more knowledgeable about the United States than its Asian neighbors. He lamented that more importance isn't placed on the relationship between Indian and Japanese cultures and the relationship between Buddhism and Hinduism, especially during this period of "the collision of cultures and religions in an ever smaller world." The talk also touched on contradictions of 'inclusive-ism and exclusive-ism'; the limitations of words in the relating and describing of spiritual experience; the realization of the Reality; and the practice of compassion as taught by Buddha.

Following a brief summation of the key points presented in the talk by the swami, lunch prasad was served at 12:30. The afternoon session began at 3:00 with chanting, reading, Q&A, and meditation. Tea was served at 4:30 and aratrik bhajans (vespers), reading and meditation began at 6:15.

Embassy Talk

Our monthly talk on the Yoga Aphorisms of Pantanjali was held at the Indian Embassy on 24 May. The session discussed safe techniques of pranayama and other matters related its practice.

• A Story to Remember •

Cause and Effect

A man who lived on the northern frontier of China believed he was skilled at interpreting events. One day for no reason, his horse ran away to the nomads across the border. Everyone tried to console him, but his father said, "What makes you so sure this isn't a blessing?"

Some months later his horse returned, bringing a splendid nomad stallion. Everyone congratulated him, but his father said, "What makes you so sure this isn't a disaster?"

Their household was richer by the fine horse, which the son loved to ride. One day he fell and broke his hip. Everyone tried to console him, but his father said, "What makes you so sure this isn't a blessing?"

A year later the nomads came in force across the border, and every able-bodied man took his bow and went into battle. The Chinese frontiersmen lost nine of every ten men. Only because the son was lame did father and son survive to take care of each other.

Truly, blessing turns to disaster, and disaster to blessing: the changes have no end, nor can the mystery be fathomed.

Taoist

•Thought of the Month•

KINDNESS

Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest complement, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn life around.

- Leo Buscaglia

Second Visit to Manila

from a report by Enrico Colombo in Manila

Swami Medhasananda arrived at Manila airport on Friday May 9, at about 9.30 p.m. This was his second visit to the Philippines, having first gone there in August 2002 at the invitation of Italian brothers and devotees, Enrico and Carlo Colombo, now in business there. On that occasion the swami had pointed out that he would like the opportunity of doing more work there next time jokingly quoting a Bengali proverb, "When going to a festival, take along some bananas to sell". That is, don't just go for the merry making, take the opportunity to do some business too.

Accordingly, the swami's schedule was quite full on this trip. On Saturday morning he visited the University of Santo Tomas (Saint Thomas), the oldest such institution in the Philippines, founded by the Spanish during their four-hundred-year colonization of the country, and now managed by the Catholic Church. The Philippines is, in fact, the only predominately Christian nation in Asia, although there is a significant Muslim presence, especially in the south of the country.

This visit was followed by a quick lunch at a Filipino restaurant in a district named Intramuros, the old Spanish citadel. The swami proved on this occasion that he could weather the challenges of local cuisine, even though the chef had gone the extra mile in preparing a Filipino-style curry sauce - not listed in the menu - to add a more familiar zest to a vegetable preparation .

After a short rest, the swami gave a talk on "Peace" to more than twenty participants, mostly Filipinos, with the exception of three Italians and one distinguished Indian, none other than the Indian Ambassador herself. This talk took place in the dining room of the modest hotel where the swami was staying. The programme lasted about three hours, including a lively question and answer session.

Quite a few participants showed genuine interest in the practice of meditation, which is not part of the local religious tradition. In fact, several participants expressed the hope that the swami may lead a session of guided meditation on his next visit. The whole programme was in English, a very popular second language in the Philippines - the official language being Tagalog - and this provided for easy communication.

Later most of the participants joined the swami for supper at a very simple Indian restaurant nearby. Although the Indian chef had been advised to be prudent with the spices, in her eagerness to please her guests she must have slightly overlooked this recommendation and some of the simple vegetarian preparations resulted in a rather surprising experience for quite a few of the Filipino guests, most of whom were experiencing Indian food for the first time on this occasion. "A meal people will remember" was one comment.

On Sunday May 11, a little after noon, the swami delivered his second lecture of this trip at the Manila Hindu Temple. The talk, again in English, was about "Devotion as a Path to God Realization" and was attended by approximately 250 to 300 persons. It lasted slightly over thirty minutes and was included in the regular Sunday service for the Indian community gathering. Afterward the swami was warmly treated to a lunch with the temple priests and officials inside the temple compound.

A visit to the "Virgin of Baclaran", an impressive and crowded church dedicated to Mother Mary, and supper at a popular Manila Bay dining place completed the swami's short stay in Manila, taking a morning flight back to Tokyo on Monday, May 12. Significantly, many of the Filipino participants to his talks, the Manila Hindu Temple officials, and even the kind lady professor who had welcomed the swami at the University of Santo Tomas, all expressed the hope to see the swami soon again in the Philippines.

In the April issue of The Vedanta Kyokai we mentioned the swami's visit to a local elementary school. We present here three of several photos taken by devotees on that occasion...



Mrs. Matsuda and daughter, Kirari, assist.



The class teacher gets in the spirit.



A captivated audience.

Issued by: **The Vedanta Society of Japan** (Nippon Vedanta Kyokai)
4-18-1 Hisagi, Zushi-shi, Kanagawa-ken 249-0001 JAPAN
Phone: 81-468-73-0428 Fax: 81-468-73-0592
website: <http://www.vedanta.jp> email: info@vedanta.jp