



# The Vedanta Kyokai

News, Updates and Miscellany from the Vedanta Society of Japan

July 2003

Volume 1 Number 4

## Thus Spake...

"Many are the names of God and infinite the forms through which He may be approached. In whatever name and form you worship Him, through that you will realize Him." ...**Sri Ramakrishna**

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you. He who keeps my commandment loves me: and he who loves me shall be loved by my Father and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." ...**Jesus Christ**

## Monthly Calendar

### HOLY DAYS

Sunday the 13th  
**Guru Purnima - Birth**

Sunday the 27th  
**Swami Ramakrishnananda  
- Birth**

## Tokyo Celebrates Vivekananda

The Vedanta Society of Japan (Nippon Vedanta Kyokai or NVK) again held its largest annual public event, *The 141st Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda*, at the Toshima Kokaido (Toshima Ward Public Hall) in Ikebukuro, Tokyo on June 22nd. The celebration, as always, was free to the public and, as stated in the printed handout, "is to pay tribute to the great Swami and to highlight the various facets of his personality and deliberate on his message..." This is the tenth year that the celebration has been held in Tokyo, and by many accounts it was also one of the most successful.

About 300 people attended the event coming from many points along the Japanese archipelago. One good friend even flew in from the Philippines. And although there were quite a few Indians and a smattering of other nationalities present, the overwhelming majority were Japanese. Our questionnaire (or *anketo*) requesting individual impressions of the programme and suggestions for possible improvements received a much greater response than in previous years.

The invocation and vedic peace prayer were led by Swami Medhasananda

and a welcome address was given by Professor Tsuyoshi Nara, vice-president of the Celebration Committee. A short talk was given and release of a special issue of our bi-monthly publication, *Universal Gospel*, and the new children's book on Swami Vivekananda (see accompanying story) was made by His Excellency Mr. Aftab Seth, Ambassador of India. The panelists presented talks in on 'Swami Vivekananda's message in the context of Insecurity in Modern Life.' Panelists included Professor Cyril Veliath of Sophia University, Professor Kathy R. Matsui of Seisen University and Mr. Kenichiro Toyofuku, a Japanese government official. For the convenience of all in attendance, all these talks were presented in both English and Japanese. The Master of Ceremonies again this year was Ms. Kuniko Hirano.

This is a fairly remarkable undertaking, given the logistics involved, that just wouldn't be possible without the loving cooperation of many volunteers. And although the planning and organizing required to select guest speakers and finalize the day's

## **Vivekananda (cont from page 1)...**

schedule by the Celebration Committee had been concluded over the previous several months, the physical preparing, packing, lifting and loading began in earnest at the Zushi Centre and elsewhere just days earlier.

The entire Kokaido is literally transformed for the day, complete with a life-sized, framed, standing colour photo of Swami Vivekananda installed at back centre-stage; dozens of flower arrangements and bouquets both large and small; title banners and streamers; complete public address, video recording and video presentation systems and musical instruments; and kitchen supplies and homemade dishes to feed the volunteers. In the foyer of the Kokaido nearly all of the publications offered by NVK are displayed for purchase at discounts of from 20% to 30%. This includes dozens of English-language titles on one side and our ever growing library of Japanese-language offerings on the other. There are photos, cassettes, incense and, more recently, CDs; all of which must be sorted, labeled with a bar-code for inventory control and loaded up in a large rented van for cartage from Zushi to Tokyo.

Again this year, all the sound, video and musical electronics were the responsibility of Mr. Atsushi Suzuki, whose studio is in Totsuka - between Zushi and Yokohama, which were packed up, brought in and operated with the help of Ms. Kaori Izumida (Shanti) and Mr. Shigeki Yoshida. The stage crew, under the leadership of Ms. Tomoko Hiraishi, was responsible for the decorating and set up of the panelist's table and presentation podium and the beautiful flower arrangements. Kitchen and lunch preparations were deliciously managed by culinary experts under the direction of Mrs. Karabi Mukherji and Mrs. Rita Kar. The reception area, where volunteers get their name cards and guests sign in and receive their

copies of the special issue of *Universal Gospel* and other handouts, was managed by Mr. Shyamal Kar and party. Sales of books and other items were attended to by Mr. Suzuki, Mr. Ogami, Mr. Colombo, Mrs. Hanari and others. Among other activities, Mr. Kanai also took photographs throughout the day. And, as always, our good friend at the popular Taj Indian Restaurant provided tea and a delectable boxed assortment of Indian treats as refreshment for all in attendance.

One of the favorite segments of this yearly event is the cultural programme. Over the years the audience has been entertained by music and dance performances from many cultural and religious traditions including, Japanese Buddhist chanting and dance, Christian choral music, modern Japanese and western Vedantic songs and even a classical sitar performance. This year we were treated to chanting by Kyokai members from our local Indian community and modern devotional songs in Japanese by Japanese members. The latter included newly composed songs dedicated to Swami Vivekananda, one of which was a collaboration with words by Mr. Moichi Chiba and music by Ms. Kaori Izumida (Shanti). We are delighted that over the recent years Shanti has been inspired to compose and present these new songs in the local language and that they have been so well received.

(cont on page 3)

### **●Thought of the Month●**

Most of us are not conscious  
of our consciousness.

Our so-called consciousness  
is mostly of a vague, diffused,  
unconscious variety.

Our consciousness is all diffusing  
out through the senses.

Stop this diffusion.  
Then focus it at one point.  
From that point, pass on to the circle.

Swami Yatiswarananda

more volunteers get their name cards and guests sign in and receive their

The day's programme concluded with a short video presentation on the life of Swami Vivekananda. This video was produced in India by the Ramakrishna Order and narrated in English by the famous Indian presenter Mr. Pranay Ray. Prof. Cyril Veliath, Prof. Tsuyoshi Nara and Mr. Ranjan Gupta worked very hard to provide Japanese subtitles for our audience. At the film's conclusion one Japanese attendee commented that although she had heard much of Swamiji's greatness and that she had indeed read about him, the video was both informative and easy to understand, and that it had helped to, well, humanize this great saint by encapsulating the milestones of his short life and the vastness of his accomplishments. She felt the video was a wonderful introduction to Swami Vivekananda for others like her, and especially for newcomers. Overall, there was a general consensus that this 141st Birth Anniversary celebration would result in more Japanese interest in Swamiji and in the study of his message.

### **First Children's Book Released**

The Vedanta Society of Japan (NVK) released its first publication intended for children's reading in the Japanese language at the Vivekananda Birth Celebration held in Tokyo on June 22. The Story of Vivekananda (Indo Kenja Monogatari-Swami Vivekananda Denki Ehon) is an illustrated biography on the life and message of this great sage of modern India.

More than simply a direct language translation, this Japanese edition was edited over the course of six to seven years with careful attention given to not only to language, but also to cultural considerations in conveying Vivekananda's message to the youth of this unique nation.

Published by NVK and printed in India, the edition was well received by the mostly Japanese audience in attendance at the celebration and several copies were sold during the course of the event.

### **• A Story to Remember •**

#### **The Merchant and the Robber**

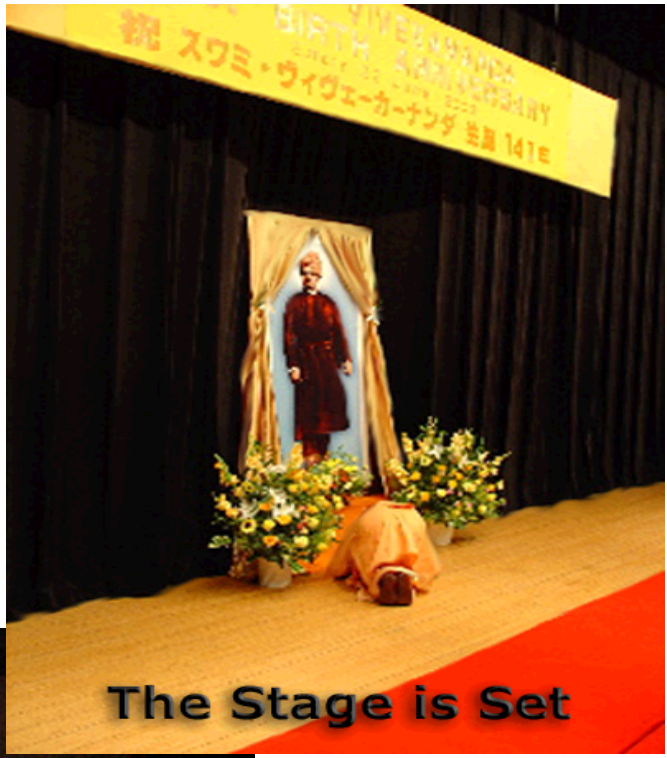
Once a wealthy merchant had to take a business trip to the capital city which was some 2,000 miles away. For this venture he also had to carry a rather large sum of fifty thousand rupees in notes of one thousand each. He booked first class train passage and prepared for the two-night-one-day journey to the capital.

An alert thief scented the matter and managed to book himself in the same first class compartment as the merchant. That evening the thief cautiously observed the merchant counting out the 50 one-thousand-rupee notes and warily keeping a close eye on a small attache case at his side as the hour grew late. When the merchant finally fell off to sleep the robber took his chance, but upon opening the case could not find any money inside. In the morning he watched again as the merchant opened the case and counted the notes as he had done the night before. And again, as the merchant slept the thief seized the case, but to his utter amazement the money was not to be found.

Having thus failed twice and as the train drew nearer the capital, the thief thought better of getting off at the next stop. Taking leave of the merchant he said, "Sir, I am a robber by profession and quite expert at my trade. I was travelling with you with the sole objective of stealing that very substantial sum of money you are carrying. Both nights after you had fallen asleep I searched your attache case and each time I found nothing. But again this morning I find you taking out the notes from the same case and counting them up before my eyes. You certainly must possess magical powers to have deluded me so well. May I ask, sir, where you kept the money hidden?"

The merchant replied, "Well, magic had nothing to do with it. I simply kept the money under your bed. When you entered the bathroom each night I would put it under your bed and take it out again in the morning when you went out for a bath. Your failure was in not searching for the treasure in the proper place. Had you searched your own bed rather than my attache case you may have succeeded. Seek (thyself) within and thou shalt find."





The Stage is Set



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