



# The Vedanta Kyokai

News, Updates and Miscellany from the Vedanta Society of Japan

August and September 2003

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## Thus Spake...

*"Our essential point is love. It is through love alone that the spiritual family of Sri Ramakrishna has grown and developed."*

...**Sri Sarada Devi - The Holy Mother**

*"Truth has many aspects. Infinite truth has infinite expressions. Though the sages speak in diverse ways, they express one and the same truth."*

...**Sri Krishna**

## Japan Centre's First President Mourned

With heavy hearts we bring you word that Swami Siddharthanandaji, aged 75, passed away on 3 August at 11:10 p.m. at the Varanasi Home of Service, India. Though first formed in 1958, the Vedanta Society of Japan's affiliation with the Ramakrishna Math and Mission did not become official until 1984. At that time the Swami became the first resident monk of the Zushi Ashrama where he remained for nine years, until his health began to fail. Swami Siddharthanandaji has many admirers in Japan. The Zushi Centre will conduct a memorial service for the late Swami during its monthly retreat on Sunday, September 7. All are cordially invited to attend.

### Monthly Calendar

## BIRTHDAYS

Swami Niranjanananda -12 Aug

Sri Krishna -19 Aug

Swami Advaitananda -26 Aug

Swami Abhedananda -20 Sep

Swami Akhandananda -26 Sep

## Swami Speaks at IIFWP Summit in Seoul

The IIFWP (Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace) held a summit of world leaders in Seoul, Korea, August 11-16, 2003. Dedicated to the ambitious theme "The World at a Turning Point: A Global Vision of Peace and Good Governance", more than 360 esteemed leaders (including religious heads, current and former government ministers, political leaders, bureaucrats, NGOs and media representatives) from 150 nations took part in various conferences to address many of the world's critical issues from the Middle East to the Korean Peninsula and from the United States to the United Nations.

Swami Medhasananda's participation in the Summit was twofold; the first being to take an active part in a closed "Special Consultation on the Interreligious Council Initiative" with

representatives of Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish, Confucian, Hindu and Sikh traditions; and the other to give an address in an open session entitled "Special Committee on Peace and Governance: Focus on South Asia".

The closed session was, in terms of its goal of creating a draft proposal for a permanent Interreligious Council to sit at the United Nations, quite an undertaking. Excerpts from a glowing report on the results of this session include, "On many issues members of the committee started very far from each other in perspectives and commitments... Debate was unrestrained... Committee members were able to overcome serious differences of opinion because everyone in

## **Summit** (cont from page 1)

the room was committed to the higher good and value of the project... As a result, they achieved thoroughgoing consensus on a complex and difficult document in just a few hours...The world sorely needs the collective wisdom of the world's great spiritual traditions..."

In the open session the Swami gave a brief talk on "The Role of Religious Leaders in the Harmony of Religions". This talk was well received and the Japan Office of the IIFWP published a Japanese translation of the address in the September issue of their magazine.

The following are excerpts from that talk:

"...It was Swami Vivekananda who had focused on the harmony of religions more than a hundred years before at the world's first Parliament of Religions held in Chicago, USA "...As Sri Ramakrishna said, 'There are many

essential and nonessential things in our scriptures - like sugar grains and sand grains in a mixing pot. Let us try to give importance to the essential things and ignore the nonessential things.'..."

"...By studying other religions we may even incorporate some of the ideas of other faiths without, of course, affecting the main character of our respective faiths..."

"...So I look forward to that day when a Hindu monk will be invited to a church or a mosque to give a talk on Hindu philosophy and vice-versa. On such occasions we may talk more on philosophy and theology than on rituals, and we should also emphasize the points where we agree rather than where we may disagree..."

While we cannot yet report that this IIFWP Summit will result in the implementation of any of the expressed goals of the organisers, we can report that the participants seized this opportunity to meet and share ideas for the realization of the common good, and at least to that extent the Summit achieved its goal.

## **July News Briefs**

### **• July 5th - Shimbashi, Tokyo**

The last discourse on the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna was held at our regular monthly meeting in Shimbashi. These discussions had continued for about one year and the session launched a new series of discourses on the Bhagavad Gita.

### **• July 12th - Okinawa**

Swami paid a visit to Okinawa with Mr. Ko Hanari, who teaches yoga, and gave a discourse on Karma Yoga in Japanese to a small group on this southern-most island chain. During this trip the Swami paid a visit to a local Hindu temple and met with many Indians and a few Japanese who showed interest in the teachings of Vedanta and Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. They expressed hope of organizing talks for the Swami in the near future to be held at the temple.

### **• July 20th - Zushi Retreat**

The topic of the lecture was "Special Manifestation of God". A guided meditation was also introduced and will be incorporated in all future monthly retreats. A short planned service (Karma Yoga) was proposed by the Swami and welcomed.

### **• 26th July - Indian Embassy**

The monthly talk at the Indian Embassy in Tokyo concluded discussions on "Meditation According to Pantanjali's Yoga Sutra"

## Mitake-san Summer Retreat

The Vedanta Society held its yearly retreat on Mount Mitake (Mitake-san) from the evening of Friday, August 22nd, to the early afternoon of Monday the 25th. About 40 devotees and family members attended for one or more days and, judging by the responses to our questionnaire, all enjoyed a spiritually uplifting experience.

This is the third year that the retreat has been held at the Yama-Naka-So (mid-mountain-house) minshuku (a traditional, Japanese-style, owner-resident inn) - the Swami and devotees having established a gracious rapport with the proprietors. Located northwest of downtown Tokyo, Mitake-san is easily accessible from all points in and around Tokyo via train services and many are surprised that the secluded mountainous region is actually located within the Tokyo municipality.

Activities began a little late on Friday with evening prayers, reading and meditation starting around 7 p.m. This was followed by supper and a brief orientation gathering of the early arrivals. Lights-out is at 10 p.m., which is a good thing since the full-schedule of daily activities begins at 5:20 a.m. with meditation followed by chanting, bhajans and reading. Guided yoga exercising or personal reading time is allotted from 7 a.m. to breakfast time at 8 a.m. After breakfast, the Swami gives discourses-this year, "One and Many" on the 23rd and "Way of Peace" on the 24th, which are followed by a rest period and optional meditation until lunch, which is served at noon. A Q & A session and guided meditation is held from 2:30 to 4 p.m. when all break for tea.

This is followed by an ample free period and many take the opportunity to take nature walks or sight-seeing treks - Mitake Shrine, a local tourist attraction, is located just a few minutes away - with the

### • A Story to Remember •

#### The Three Robbers

"Once a rich man was passing through a forest, when three robbers surrounded him and robbed him of all his wealth. After snatching all his possessions from him, one of the robbers said: 'What's the good of keeping the man alive? Kill him.' Saying this, he was about to strike their victim with his sword, when the second robber interrupted and said: 'There's no use in killing him. Let us bind him fast and leave him here. Then he won't be able to tell the police.' Accordingly the robbers tied him with a rope, left him and went away.

"After a while the third robber returned to the rich man and said: 'Ah! You're badly hurt, aren't you? Come, I'm going to release you.' The third robber set the man free and led him out of the forest. When they came near the highway, the robber said, 'Follow this road and you will reach home easily.' 'But you must come with me too', said the man. 'You have done so much for me. We shall all be happy to see you at our home.' 'No,' said the robber, 'it is not possible for me to go there. The police will arrest me.' So saying, he left the rich man after pointing out his way.

"Now, the first robber, who said: 'What's the good of keeping the man alive? Kill him', is *tamas*. It destroys. The second robber is *rajas*, which binds a man to the world and entangles him in a variety of activities. *Rajas* makes him forget God. *Sattva* alone shows the way to God. It produces virtues like compassion, righteousness, and devotion. Again, *sattva* is like the last step of the stairs. Next to it is the roof. The Supreme Brahman is man's own abode. One cannot attain the Knowledge of Brahman unless one transcends the three *gunas*."

[ Adapted from the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna ]

#### Announcements

- Swami Medhasananda will travel to India, Singapore and Malaysia from September 9 to October 18. No monthly talks/retreat will be held in October
- All are invited to attend our Kali Puja celebration at the Zushi Centre on October 24 from 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

## Mitake-san (cont. from page 3)

evening programme and prayers starting at 6 p.m.

The Mitake-san Summer Retreat is fast becoming one of the Vedanta Society's favoured traditions, and if you haven't yet attended, do make plans to participate next year.

### Swami Attends Inaugural Yoga Therapy Conference

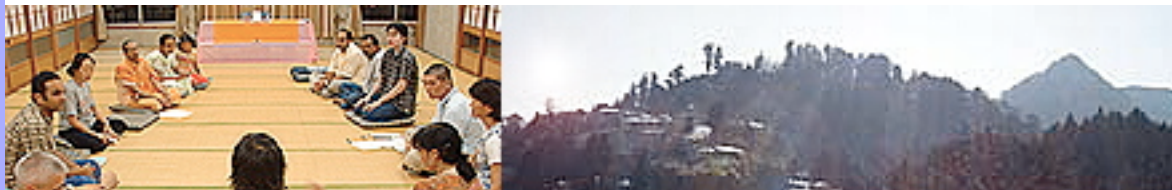
At the invitation of the Japan Yoga Therapy Association, Swami Medhasananda gave a talk on "A Spiritual Approach to Holistic Health" mostly in Japanese at the inaugural meeting of the group held in Osaka on August 9, 2003. Although the association's lecture schedule focused on alternative medicine, therapy and psychology techniques, the Swami's talk on a holistic approach, including the cultivation of spirituality as postulated by Vedanta philosophy, was very well received.

### ●Thought of the Month●

Every one of us possesses abundant energy for thought power: the questions are how it should be directed and what the ultimate object is that each one of us should aim for. It is absolutely necessary that we drill ourselves in right thinking, for the mental attitude we hold when we seek to work, affects our relative success or failure. When we have mastered the secret of thought power, the true determining factor of life, we may carry into our outer life the embodiment of our highest ideals. Thought control therefore must be acquired by concentration, and receptivity to thought is of primary importance to true advancement. The principle is simple, and its application is easy, if we will try to carry it into effect. The art of right thinking consists of disengaging one subject from the distracting stream of ever-varying thought, and dwelling in that alone, making an inlet for that enlightenment which finally leads us to becoming one with the higher Self. Regular thought training tends to this development and enables one to arouse the higher vibrations of thought, the most powerful of all the invisible forces.

## Mitake-san Comments and Photos

*"It was a very spiritual experience that I will take back home to my daily life..."*



*"Relaxing activity schedule... I will certainly attend next year, too!"*

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](mailto:info@vedanta.jp)