



# The Vedanta Kyokai

News, Updates and Miscellany from the Vedanta Society of Japan

November - December 2003

Volume 1 Number 7

Thus Spake...

"As the wind removes the cloud, so the name of the Lord destroys the cloud of worldliness that overcasts the mind." ... Sri Sarada Devi – The Holy Mother

"I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. At that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." ... Jesus – The Christ

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**Monthly Calendar**

**BIRTHDAYS**

**Sri Sri Ma Sarada Devi**

16 Dec

**Swami Shivanandaji**

19 Dec

**Christmas Eve**

24 Dec

## Swami Bhaskarananda Gives Talks at Monthly Retreat

As the November 16, Sunday Retreat began it was evident that many long-term members of the Nippon Vedanta Kyokai had come to pay their respects to Swami Bhaskarananda-ji, President of the Vedanta Society of Western Washington in Seattle, himself a long-time friend of the Kyokai and the early efforts of establishing a formally-affiliated Vedanta Society here. After Vedic chanting, a short reading in English and Japanese from Swami Vivekananda's Raja Yoga and a brief introduction by Swami Medhasananda-ji, Swami Bhaskarananda began his talk on *Spiritual Practice in Everyday Life*.

Appreciating that his lecture given in English would again be translated into Japanese, he began his comments with a story of two friends, one English and the other Chinese, who lived in London. The Chinese was returning to his native village in China and asked his friend to accompany him, to which the Englishman happily agreed. It was a long journey and upon entering the village it became clear that he was the first foreigner to have visited the village and a formal reception was arranged.

When the Englishman learned that he was expected to give a talk at this function, he asked his friend, "In which language?" Knowing that he couldn't speak a word of Chinese, the friend answered, "Chinese, of course, but don't worry. When your time comes to speak, just stand and bow to the crowd and sit down." Later when the anticipated moment arrived and the Englishman was introduced to the gathered villagers, he slowly rose, bowed to the left, bowed to the right and took his seat. The villagers responded with thunderous applause and the Englishman, emboldened and enthused by the (con't page 2)

**Bhaskaranandaji**...(con't from page 1)

reaction, again arose and bowed to the left, to the right and to the center, but instead of applause he was instantly showered with rotten eggs and tomatoes. Shocked, the Englishman turned to his friend and asked what he had done wrong. His friend replied, "We Chinese don't like long lectures." Stating that he was in a similar situation when addressing a Japanese audience, the Swami acknowledged the help provided by our interpreter, Mr. Itoh, and said he would, therefore, keep his talk brief.

In defining what is meant by spiritual practice, the Swami emphasized that Sri Ramakrishna had said that two things are needed for householders to experience God; holy company and constant remembrance.

Holy company gives the aspirant inspiration by example; which he illustrated by one who has a stationary exercise bike at home. At first exercising is begun with great enthusiasm, but as one continues by oneself, a gradual loss of interest ensues until one stops exercising altogether. Whereas, if one went to a gymnasium, he would be inspired by others to continue. Holy company inspires one to continue in spiritual practice.

In illustrating other benefits derived from holy company, the Swami pointed out that Sri Ramakrishna had said that the mind was like a white cloth; if soaked in red dye it becomes red, if soaked in green dye, it becomes green. Likewise, if the mind is soaked in violence, it becomes violent; if soaked in holiness, the mind becomes holy. God is the holiest of the holy and a pure mind enables one to see God. Again, in illustrating the transcendental qualities of the pure mind the Swami used the example of the three states of H<sup>2</sup>O in a room – solid, liquid and vapor –ice being the least malleable; water

being limited to the qualities of a liquid; but water-vapor, being invisible and formless, is able to reach all corners of the room. Likewise, the pure mind reaches the outer frontiers of time, space and causation.

Again, the Swami said that all can be achieved by chanting the name of the Lord as frequently as one can in a 24 hour day; 20 hours being more beneficial than 4 hours. This is the key to constant remembrance.

The Swami also pointed out that the great spiritual teachers taught us to spiritualize our secular activities. Family members should be viewed as members of the family of God. In all activities one should be a caretaker in order to please God. At work, if making goods or providing services, make your products as perfect as possible to please God. Goodness is next to Godliness and the criterion is self-sacrifice in all relations and activities.

After some questions and answers the morning session came to a close and all enjoyed visiting with Swami Bhaskaranandaji during a sumptuous prasad-lunch. The afternoon session continued with a talk entitled *The Present and Future of Vedanta in America*, pointing out the initial impact of the movement with the arrival of Swami Vivekananda and the ongoing efforts by the succeeding monks towards a very bright future. After a brief Q&A session tea was served.

### ●Thought of the Month●

“ My great concern is not whether you have failed, but whether you are content with your failure”

... Abraham Lincoln

• A Story to Remember •

**The Rabbi's Advice**

A poor man had come to the end of his rope, so he went to his rabbi for advice.

"Holy Rabbi!" he cried. "Things are in a bad way with me, and are getting worse all the time! We are poor, so poor that my wife, my six children, my in-laws and I have to live in a one-room hut. We get in each other's way all the time. Our nerves are frayed, and because we have plenty of troubles, we quarrel. Believe me—my home is a hell and I'd sooner die than continue living this way!"

The rabbi pondered the matter gravely. "My son," he said. "promise to do as I tell you and your condition will improve."

"I promise, Rabbi," answered the troubled man. "I'll do anything you say."

"Tell me...what animals do you own?"

"I have a cow, a goat and some chickens."

"Very well! Go home now and take all these animals into your house to live with you."

The poor man was dumbfounded, but since he had promised the rabbi, he went home and brought all the animals into his house.

The following day the poor man returned to the rabbi and cried. "Rabbi, what a misfortune you brought upon me! I did as you told me and brought the animals into the house. And now what have I got? Things are worse than ever! My life is a perfect hell—the house is turned into a barn! Save me, Rabbi. Help me!"

"My son," replied the rabbi serenely, "go home and take the chickens out of your house. God will help you!"

So the poor man went home and took the chickens out of his house. But it was not long before he again came running to the rabbi.

"Holy Rabbi!" he wailed. "Help me, save me! The goat is smashing everything in the house—she's turning my life into a nightmare."

"Go home," said the rabbi gently, "and take the goat out of the house. God will help you."

The poor man returned to his house and removed the goat. But it wasn't long before he again came running to the rabbi lamenting loudly, "What a misfortune you've brought upon my head, Rabbi! The cow has turned my house into a stable! How can you expect a human to live side by side with an animal?"

"You're right—a hundred times right!" agreed the rabbi. "Go straight home and take the cow out of your house.!"

And the poor unfortunate hastened home and took the cow out of his house.

Not a day passed before he came running again to the rabbi.

"Rabbi!" cried the poor man, his face beaming. "You've made life sweet again for me. With all the animals out the house is so quiet, so roomy and so clean! What a pleasure!"

...from Chassid folklore

## Swami Medhasananda Visits Sapporo

From November 2nd to the 4th, Swami Medhasanandaji visited Sapporo to give his very first lecture here.

Since for most of the attendants, it was their first time to hear a spiritual talk, the chosen theme for the lecture was "Peace Of Mind"; a topic rather familiar to most of us. We are happy to report that, beyond our expectations, roughly thirty people filled the meeting room; although as usual, they were mostly women. After beginning his lecture, it didn't take long for Maharaji to quickly capture the audience's full attention.

During the question and answer period, some important spiritual questions were asked and the whole session lasted one hour longer than planned. Some people asked Maharaji for a guided meditation, but unfortunately, there was not enough time.

According to the questionnaires, most attendants were deeply impressed and inspired by Maharaji's talk.

They are already looking forward to his next visit to Sapporo.

The devotees in Sapporo – Mr. Miura, The Matsuokas, and The d'Amours – took Maharaji around Sapporo during his visit. We first took him to Hokkaido University, followed by a visit to the Hokkaido Shrine. For Maharaji's final sightseeing spot, we took him to Mt. Maruyama, which enshrines Kuukai (Kouboudaishi) and is meant to be a replica of Shikoku Hachijuuhakkasho.

Since winter is coming late this year in Hokkaido, Maharaj jokingly expressed some disappointment mixed with surprise at not seeing a white landscape upon his arrival. So in closing, we hope that he will visit us again soon, when we can proudly display Hokkaido's white winter wonderland.

... Contributed by Ms. Takako D'Amours of Sapporo, Japan

## Music Therapy and Meditation Collaboration

Held on November 15, from 10:00 am to 12:30 pm at the Bukkyo Dendo (Buddhism Missionary) Center Building near the JR Tamachi Station in Minato-ku, Tokyo, a unique programme of group music therapy and meditation was organized by Darshanam ([www.darshanam.com](http://www.darshanam.com)), representing the Bharatiya Sanskriti Darshan Trust ([www.ayurved-wagholi.org](http://www.ayurved-wagholi.org)) in Vishwa Shanti Dham, Pune, India. This trust is aimed at promoting the rich Indian heritage of traditional science, arts and culture.

The music therapy programme was performed by Dr. Chandrakant Sardeshmukh, a renowned sitarist and an executive trustee in charge of the trust's Department of Indian Classical Music.

Following the music, a guided meditation of about 30 minutes was conducted by Swami Medhasananda, President, Vedanta Society of Japan, who then gave about a 45-minute discourse on the "Necessity of Meditation". A Q&A session then followed on the difference between prayer and meditation and other related issues.

One participant reported, "It seemed that some blocks and stress were released due to the music therapy and I could concentrate well and went into deep meditation!" According to my experience, Dr. Chandrankant's music therapy helps to bring peace in body and mind, essential for deep meditation.

Everyone in attendance enjoyed the programme and the collaboration was evidently a success and may be presented again next year.

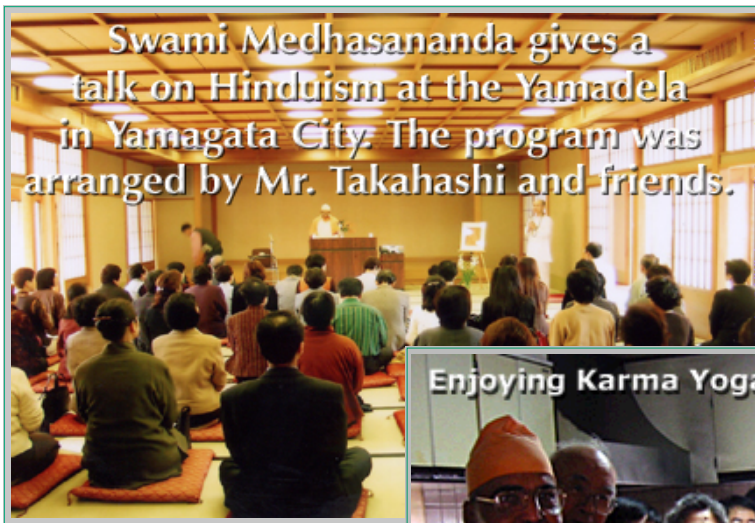
... Contributed by Ms. Enomi Kase of Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo

## General Announcements

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Sri Sri Sarada Devi's Birthday Celebration will be held at the Centre's Monthly Retreat on December 21st from 11 am. The afternoon session of the Retreat will feature a talk by Professor Tsuyoshi Nara on "Hinduism and Shintoism". All are invited to attend.

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Christmas Eve will be observed from 7 pm at the Kyokai on December 24. A programme of Christmas carols, reading from the Bible and a discourse is planned. All are invited to attend.

•  
A programme of "Karma Yoga" was initiated at the November monthly retreat at the Zushi Centre. This is an opportunity for interested parties to offer service to the Kyokai by helping to clean the Centre's building and grounds for about an hour. A sign-up sheet will be posted in the foyer and Mr. Kanai (Hari) will be in charge of assignments. Your participation is welcome.



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