



The Vedanta Kyokai

News, Updates and Miscellany from the Vedanta Society of Japan

March 2004

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Thus Spake...

"Rely on Sri Ramakrishna and he will save you from your misery and bestow on you peace of mind. Take the name of the Lord and contemplate on the great sufferings Sri Ramakrishna had to undergo to take upon himself the results of bad karma of others, and then you will find that your body and mind are purified. Your grief and misery will pale into insignificance if you will only remember how Sri Ramakrishna, though absolutely pure and of divine origin, suffered for the sake of others and yet did not miss even for a moment His ecstatic joy and blissful contemplation of the Divine Mother"

... Sri Sarada Devi - The Holy Mother

"Mind is the precursor of all perceptions; mind is the most subtle of all elements in the phenomenal universe. All objectified consciousness has its origin in mind. One who speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness abides with him as his own shadow."

... The Buddha

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Monthly Calendar

• BIRTHDAYS •

Sri Gouranga Mahaprabhu

06 Mar

Swami Yogananda

10 Mar

Ramnavami

30 Mar

• KYOKAI EVENTS •

Sunday Zushi Retreat

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Birth Celebration

21 Mar

Morning Session 10:30

Afternoon Session 3PM

Musical Cultural Programme

All are invited to attend!

• A Story to Remember •

The Zen Master and the Christian

A Christian visited a Zen master and said, "Allow me to read you the Sermon on the Mount." "I shall listen with pleasure," said the master. The Christian read a sentence and looked up. The master smiled and said, "Whoever said those words was truly an enlightened man." This pleased the Christian. He read on. The master interrupted and said. "Those words come from a Savior of mankind." The Christian was delighted. He read on to the end. The master then declared, "That sermon was pronounced by someone radiant with Divinity."

The Christian's joy was boundless. He left, determined to return another day and persuade the master to become a Christian.

On the way back home he found Jesus standing by the roadside. "Lord," he said excitedly, "I got that man to confess you are divine!"

Jesus smiled and said, "And did it do you any good except inflate your Christian ego?"

- Anthony de Mello, SJ, *The Song of the Bird* 121-2

February Retreat - Sunday 15th

The Swami began his comments on the topic, 'Saints of India', by asking why it is that so many scientists can be found in the West, while the East is the birthplace of so many of the world's saints and sages. He pointed out that Swami Vivekananda had explained that the West has investigated truth in the external and the East has focused this inquiry on the internal, and while the methods may vary, Truth is One. But while the goal of scientific inquiry is in incremental truths and discoveries, the most important aspect of truth for the spiritual seeker is the ultimate truth of the soul.

"Souls spend their whole lives in

spiritual pursuits in India, then again, we find others spending their whole lives in scientific pursuits in the West," said the Swami. "Perhaps the environment is more conducive to spiritual inquiry in the East and more conducive to scientific in the West, but whatever the reason, the result is that India has produced many saints over time. From North to South; from many places of birth; not only monks, but householders; not only men, but many women are revered as saints in India. And what is it that makes this difference of environment?"

"It is that many in India believe the fulfillment of life is in spiritual realization. Not in the pursuit of

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money or fame, but in finding the way to eternal peace through the realization of God. They make God part and parcel of their daily lives. The family designates a place for the family deity in the home where they worship, say prayers and make food offerings everyday. Every new item brought into the household, greetings, problems, the daily comings and goings of family members, all is offered before the deity. From this constant inclusion and acknowledgment in daily life, love of God grows: not fear, but love."

"Saints live with God, and in turn, the lives of these souls become an inspiration for others. Throughout the many troubled periods of history, such people have shown paths that have inspired and guided - not only with spiritual, but with social implications as well. These realized souls have shown themselves to be real leaders of Indian Society. And what are some of the common features of these great souls?"

"Firstly, they have renounced all; forsaken all other loves. Other relationships and pursuits become secondary. Next is development of devotion to God and with this devotion comes knowledge. Another commonality is that most practice bhakti and have a chosen ideal of which the two incarnations of God, Rama and Krishna, are favored in such aspects as a master and a child.

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Accordingly, they practice for months and years in a tremendous struggle directed at purifying the mind in the conquering of secular samskaras." Hints of this struggle can be seen in the lives of Christ and Buddha that every aspirant passes through. This tremendous mental agony results - because in spite of renouncing all, one still has not had the vision of one's beloved."

"Blessed are those who agonize so. It is something very special and shows great progress in spiritual life. Sri Ramakrishna, shedding tears at the end of each day, would beseech the Divine Mother, 'O Ma, another day has gone and still I have no vision of Thee!' Through this self-effort and, finally, the grace of the Lord, that 'dark night' of the soul passes and the aspirant's innermost desire is granted and fulfilled; the goal of human life is realized and one experiences true peace, joy and knowledge." Among these souls there are those feel no urgency to share this discovery and others who are driven to share it. And how is it that they share?"

"They seek the company of spiritual aspirants in order to show them the spiritual path. This these great souls do in different ways. They teach through stories and parables. They compose songs and hymns that not only guide with a message, the singers themselves experience joy in the singing of such compositions. Many gain psychic powers, and many writings are full of such

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anecdotes. So much so that ordinary devotees cannot recognize the spiritual greatness of such souls without displays of these powers. In reality, psychic powers are no indication of spiritual realization, rather, the use of such powers are considered to be obstacles to the aspirant's final goal."

As time for this talk was running short, the Swami shared one example of Indian sainthood in the person of the renowned poetess Mirabai. Meera was born in 1504 A.D. in Chaukari Village in the Merta District of Rajasthan. From her childhood Meera was devoted to Lord Krishna as the child Gopala and referred to him as 'Giridhar Nagar' as depicted in one episode of Krishna's early life. She once told her mother that the Lord had married her in a dream. Later it was arranged that she marry the Prince of Chittor of Rajasthan. This marriage raised Meera to a very high social status as the ruler of Chitter was considered to be the leader of the Hindu princes. But luck didn't favor Princess Meera. By 1527 she had lost her father, her husband and her father-in-law as well. Meera, who dedicated her life to Lord Krishna, accepted these bereavements as a matter of course.

Meera began to devote most of her time in prayer and worship and did not pay any attention to
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the etiquettes of the royal household. This led to her being subjected to great hardships and punishments after her husband and protector had died. The emperor was so enraged with Mira's conduct he set out to kill her, three instances of which she later set to song. When these hardships became intolerable and came in the way of her worship of Krishna, she left the palace for good and went to the pilgrimage of Mathura, Vrindavan and finally to Dwaraka.

Meera expressed her intense and deep love of God in a beautiful style. She composed hundreds of songs in a simple, unpretentious style. Her songs have gained a unique popularity and are sung by the rich and the poor alike, even to this day. Mirabai's songs don't place much importance on rituals and formalism such as rules on food, fasting, cleanliness and such, as in this free translation of one song:

If we could reach the Lord through bathing in water, there are many animals that live in water who would have realized God.

If we could reach Him through nothing but berries and wild nuts, then surely there are monkeys and bats who would have realized God.

If we could reach Him by munching dry leaves, then goats would surely get to the Holy One before us!

If worship of stone statues could bring us all the way, I would have adored a granite mountain years ago.

"So how does one realize Hari?" asked the Swami. "Mira says only with real and genuine love."

News Briefs

• 19-23 Jan •

At the invitation of a devotee, Swami Medhasananda visited Hong Kong for the first time where he stayed for five days. He met with a few devotees who invited him to give a talk on his next visit. The Swami was very impressed with the very modern facilities and truly international atmosphere of Hong Kong. He also took the opportunity to visit the city of Shenzhen near the Hong Kong border.

• 23 Jan •

Upon the Swami's return to Tokyo he attended a Saraswati Puja at Denenchofu Hall arranged by Mr. Syamal Kar and others. The event was attended by about 100 people.

• 24 Jan •

The following day the Swami attended a Saraswati Puja at Sumida Gawa (River) at the Riverside Hall. The Swami and the Ambassador of Bangladesh each gave talks in the afternoon session followed by a cultural programme. The event was arranged by Mr. Sukhen Brahma and friends and some 300 people attended.

• 06 Feb •

There will be a class on the Bhagavad Gita given by Swami Medhasananda in Shimbashi, Tokyo from 14:00-16:00. Take the 'Ginza Guchi' exit at Shimbashi Station, the class will be held in Shimbashi-Ekimae, Biru No. 2, 9FL room #901.

●Thought of the Month●

How much peace and serenity
one would experience when no
time is wasted in worrying!

- Yogachara Hamsaraj



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