



The Vedanta Kyokai

News, Updates and Miscellany from the Vedanta Society of Japan

JULY / AUGUST 2005

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Thus Spake ...

“Mother! Destroy in me all ideas that I am great, that I am Brahmana and they are low and pariahs, for who are they but Thee in so many forms?”

... Sri Ramakrishna

“Goodwill toward all beings is the true religion; cherish in your hearts boundless goodwill to all that lives.”

... The Buddha

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Swami Vivekananda
143rd Birth Anniversary
Public Ceremony Held in Tokyo

(See story on page 2)

Monthly Calendar

• Birthdays •

Swami Ramakrishnananda
Tuesday - 2 August

Swami Niranjanananda
Friday - 19 August

• Kyokai Events •

Gautama Buddha
Birth Anniversary

SUNDAY - 17 July
11 a.m. - Zushi Retreat

Guest Speaker:

Keiyo Arai

Chief Priest of Jutokuji Buddhist
Temple, Tokyo
And Professor at Nishogakusha
University Tokyo

Subject:

Relevance of Lord Buddha's
Teachings in the Modern Age

All are invited to attend.

Tokyo Celebrates
Swami Vivekananda's 143rd Birth Anniversary

The Vedanta Society of Japan (Nippon Vedanta Kyokai) held its annual public celebration of Swami Vivekananda's 143rd birth anniversary at the Toshima Kohkaido (public hall) in Ikebukuro, Toshima Ward, Tokyo on June 5, 2005. The programme consisted of two parts; speeches and a musical cultural programme.

At 2 p.m. the Master of Ceremonies, Ms. Kuniko Hirano, welcomed the audience and introduced Swami Medhasanada, who, assisted by Mr, Moichi Chiba and Mr. Haruki Kanai, chanted a Vedic peace prayer to launch the day's programme. Ms. Hirano then introduced the panel of distinguished speakers and guests including, His Excellency Sri Manilal Tripathi, Ambassador of India, Swami Prameyanandaji, Senior Trustee and Treasurer of the Ramakrishna Order and Professor Tetsuo Yamaori, former director of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Kyoto. Swami Prameyananda was then requested to offer a flower bouquet before a life-sized photo of Swami Vivekananda set at center stage for the event.



This year a projector was incorporated which allowed translations of prepared speeches to be simultaneously displayed. This cut down on time necessary for presentations and allowed speakers to continue with their train of thought without having to stop for translations.

Ambassador Manilal Tripathi

Ambassador Tripathi's brief address in English spoke to Indian's millennia-old spiritual and cultural traditions and his thoughts on Swami Vivekananda's legacy. The ambassador noted that the defining feature of Indian culture "has been its inclusive ethos of acceptance, accommodation and synthesis." He said that India's five-thousand-year-old civilization was like a "long and unbroken journey" featuring many "streams of races and ethnicities, faiths and philosophies, scholars and settlers, pilgrims and students that have poured into India in wave after wave and have been received with open arms

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Vivekananda (from page 4)

by our hospitable land where they have mingled in a harmonious confluence."

The ambassador said that this openness had also "permeated India's philosophical and spiritual traditions" and is reflected in the Rig Veda dictum that "Truth is one though the learned describe it variously." The idea that Truth may be larger than one's perception and that Truth is yet to be known in its fullness has fostered a spirit of equal respect for all religions and faiths. He then noted key historical figures and movements that have confirmed India's tradition of religious tolerance.

He then said that Sri Ramakrishna, the great saint of Modern India, had reaffirmed these ideals proclaiming that all roads lead to the same goal, having himself strictly observed the various disciplines of Hinduism, Christianity and Islam to realize God. Swami Vivekananda had been chosen by Sri Ramakrishna to carry forward his teachings and the "inclusive spiritual heritage of India".

Possessed of an "illuminated intellect, a vast memory and a heart that was full of compassion for his fellow human beings," Swami Vivekananda inherited Sri Ramakrishna's legacy at the young age of 22. In founding the Ramakrishna Order he chose "for the realization of the Self and for the benefit of the world" as its motto. As a wondering monk throughout India, Swamiji was "greatly troubled to see the masses submerged in deep poverty, ignorance, illiteracy and superstition." He concluded that material progress and spiritual upliftment were not contradictory and that "the goal of religion was to bridge the gap between the two."

In emphasizing this point Ambassador Tripathi quoted the following from Swamiji: "Our watchword should be acceptance and not exclusion. Not only toleration but acceptance. I believe in acceptance. I accept all religions and I worship God in whatever form they worship Him. I salute all the prophets of the past, all the great ones of the present and all that are to come in the future".

In conclusion the ambassador said, "In our spiritually troubled and turbulent times, when so much of irreligiosity is perpetuated in the name of religion, when one creed's preferred path to find the same goal is claimed to be the superior path or even the only path, justifying chauvinism and intolerance, the simple words of eternal wisdom, that Sri Ramakrishna uttered and Vivekananda devoted his lifetime to spread, can guide us back to the path of sanity."

At the end of his talk Ambassador Tripathi was called upon to ceremoniously release a special issue of The Universal Gospel published by the Nippon Vedanta Kyokai for this occasion.

Swami Prameyananda was then again called upon to officially release a new CD of Hindu guided meditations in the English language also produced by the Nippon Vedanta Kyokai. The swami also spoke a few words regarding the growing popularity of meditation, the benefits of meditation for both spiritual and secular life, and expressed his appreciation to Swami Medhasananda and

(cont on page 4)



Ambassador Tripathi
releases special edition of
The Universal Gospel



Swami Prameyananda
releases new CD on
Guided Meditations

Vivekananda (from page 3)

the Vedanta Society for releasing such a CD. The swami then briefly discussed the importance of Swami Vivekananda's message of the "Oneness of Humankind" in the modern age of science and reason. The swami's comments were translated into Japanese by Professor Tsuyoshi Nara.

Swami Medhasananda then led a guided meditation in Japanese and English.

Professor Tetsuo Yamaori

Ms. Hirano then introduced the main speaker, Professor Yamaori, a renowned scholar of religious studies in Japan, having taught at various universities and authored many popular books. The professor had referred to Swami Vivekananda in one book titled, *Discovery of Asian Ideology*. His talk (a brief outline of which follows) was titled, *Religion to be Believed, Religion to be Felt*:

"In the autumn of 1995 I visited Israel for the first time in my life. The purpose of my visit to that country was to travel in the area where Jesus Christ lived and worked for his mission. I traveled to Nazareth where Jesus spent his boyhood, the River Jordan where he was baptized and the Sea of Galilee where he preached his gospel.

"While traveling to these places, I was totally surprised at the sight of endless desert. However far I traveled, I could see nothing but desert, desert, desert. Finally I arrived in the Holy City of Jerusalem, the destination of my journey. On the hill of Golgotha in Jerusalem Jesus was killed by crucifixion. To me, that holy city of Jerusalem looked like a city built on gigantic ruins, surrounded exclusively by a vast desert.

"While traveling by bus throughout the area of the Israeli desert, what came to my mind was the idea that these people living on the desert could only imagine that valuable and absolute being - God in heaven - on whom they could rely. Their earnest spiritual desire or yearning for Providence touched my heart beyond reason.

"I was convinced that the natural features of the region concerned had

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• A STORY TO REMEMBER •

Finding Light in the Darkness

Mulla Nasrudin decided to start a flower garden. He prepared the soil and planted the seeds of many beautiful flowers. When they came up, however, his garden was filled not just with his chosen flowers, but also overrun by dandelions. He sought out advice from gardeners all over and tried every method known to get rid of them but to no avail.

Finally, he walked all the way to the capital to speak to the royal gardener at the sheik's palace. The wise old man had counseled many gardeners before and suggested a variety of remedies to expel the dandelions, but Mulla had already tried them all. They sat together in silence for some time and finally the gardener looked at Nasrudin and said, "Well, then I suggest you learn to love them."

-Sufi

Vivekananda (from page 4)

brought about monotheistic religion. It also seemed to me that, having come into existence among a people living on a limitless desert, God the only absolute being for them to believe in. In this sense, the Islamic religion also belongs to the same category of religion <Religion-to-be-believed-in> like Judaism and Christianity.

"When I returned to Japan after having such experiences in Israel, I felt soothed by the abundant green landscape of my home country. Nature in Japan is blessed with ample mountains and forests, crystal-clear brooks and rivers, abundant food from the land and sea - all these sights appear just as a beautiful heaven to a person like me having just returned from the land of deserts.

"There is no need for us to seek the only valuable and absolute being in the heavens far above us. I think that absolute value does not exist in heaven but, rather, exists all over the earth. That was also what I really felt beyond reason. Such a climate can be taken as a base to generate polytheistic religions.

"Furthermore, I can say that when you enter into any dense forest or bounteous nature setting you can feel as if you hear the voices of God, Buddha or your Ancestral Spirits.

"With such peculiar sensibility the people living in the Japanese Islands have been leading their daily lives discreetly feeling the existence of God or Buddha all around them. In this way <Religion to be felt> was born and grew in the Japanese Islands.

"From my narration so far you must have understood that my term <religion

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Vivekananda (from page 5)

to be believed> indicated monotheistic religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam, while <religion to be felt> meant polytheistic religions like Hindu, Buddhism, Jainism, Shinto and many other folk religions practiced by indigenous peoples living in different parts of the world.

"Those who believe in monotheistic religion have firm faith in only one Absolute Being and tend to distinguish the Creator from the created, human beings from other creatures and the right from the wrong.

"As they are taught that the good is awarded in Heaven and the bad is punished in Hell, they are inspired to get the grace and remission of God while being afraid of the anger and punishment of God.

"Those who follow polytheistic religion are inclined to feel the Divine Spirit or Universal Life existing everywhere - both inside and outside themselves. Therefore they usually do not discriminate one from the other and accept every being as equal and essentially divine.

"They even take it for granted that Divine Spirit or Universal Life is always merciful to and protecting them - the good as well as the bad - indiscriminately.

"Ultimately they identify themselves with the Divine Being and try to start living as such in their daily lives. In our present world, full of anxiety or insecurity, nothing is more important than the recognition of Universal Life or Being manifested in innumerable different forms of this universe including the great nature and human beings.

"Our appreciation of and gratefulness to motherly graceful guidance and protection of the Divine Spirit is also important for our feeling of security. Again necessary for the same purpose is our acceptance of the diversity of human cultures - their ways of thinking and living and even physical features - as essentially of equal value and equally necessary for human existence and happiness.

"In this sense we must remember again and try to practice in our daily lives what Swami Vivekananda used to convince and teach the whole of humanity; i.e. harmony of world religions or recognition of one common essence within their seemingly different creeds and serving any needy human being without discrimination or expectation of any return.

The professor's talk was followed by a lively and interesting Q & A session. The first part of the celebration came to a close with words of thanksgiving by the Secretary of the Celebration Committee, Mr. A. P. S. Mani. •

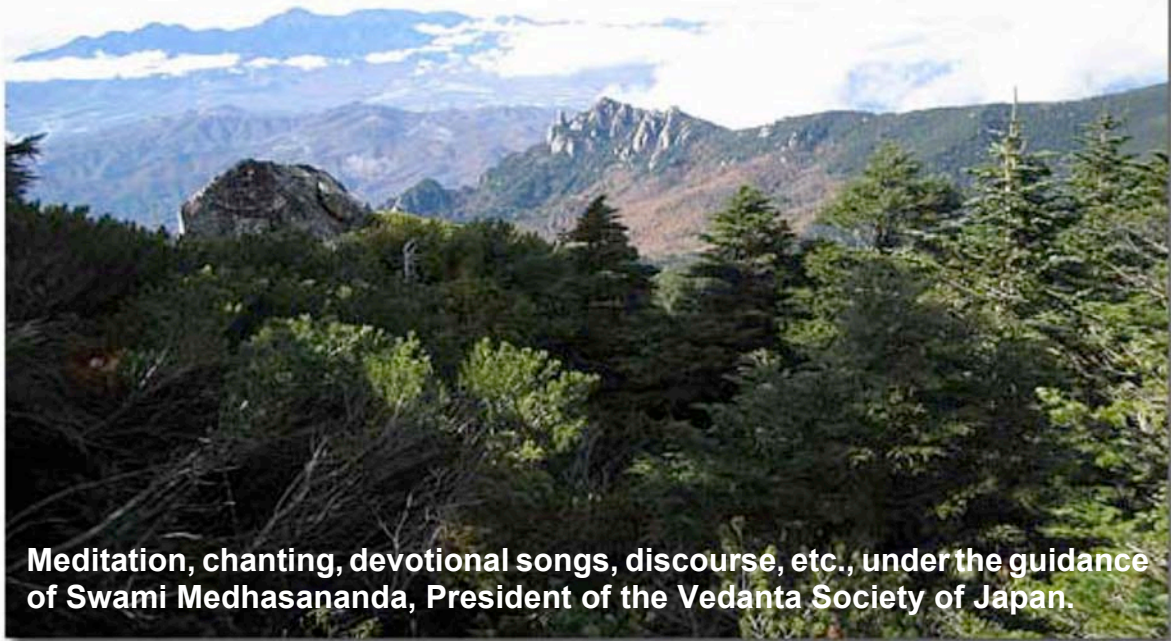
• **THOUGHT OF THE MONTH** •

**CHARACTER MAY BE MANIFESTED IN GREAT MOMENTS,
BUT IT IS MADE IN THE SMALL ONES.**

PHILIP BROOKS

Outdoor Vedanta Retreat at Kiyosato

Yamanashi-ken from September 2-5 2005



Meditation, chanting, devotional songs, discourse, etc., under the guidance of Swami Medhasananda, President of the Vedanta Society of Japan.

Organized by the Vedanta Society of Japan (PLEASE CONTACT TO CONFIRM)

Venue: KEEP School of Nature, "Forester's Camping Site"

<http://www.keep.or.jp/>

http://www.keep.or.jp/shisetu/shizen_school/stays/foresters.html

TEL: 0551-20-7701 / FAX: 0551-48-2143

ADDRESS: 3545 Kiyosato, Takane-cho, Kitamori-shi, Yamanashi-ken 407-0311

Fees (including accommodation & meals):

Adults: All (3 nights 4days) ¥22,000 - 2 nights 3 days ¥15,000

1 night 2 days ¥7,500 / 1 day (incl. lunch) ¥1,500

Children: All (3 nights 4days) ¥20,000 / 2 nights 3 days ¥13,000

1 night 2 days ¥6,500 / 1 day (incl. lunch) ¥1,500

• Payment is on that day

Personal articles to be brought: Warm clothes (highland area is cold at night), towel, toothbrush, sleepwear, insect repellent, rain gear, alarm clock, notebook & pen, torch light, shoes for walking on unpaved roads

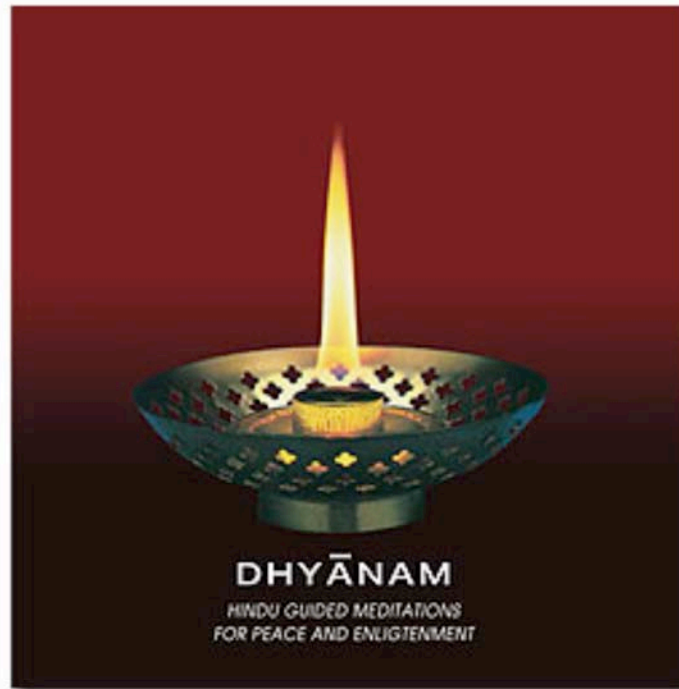
Please note:

- KEEP is located in the Yatsugatake Highlands, approximately 2 hours from Tokyo
- Accommodation is in 4 cabins in a grove. (Each cabin can accommodate 14 people.)
- Bedding is available. (Japanese futon)
- One bathing cabin is provided at the camping site.
- Assembly & meals at the main hall of the camping site.
- Silence to be observed at appointed times.
- Short pants are to be avoided.

NEW ENGLISH-LANGUAGE CD RELEASE



from
The Vedanta Society of Japan



DHYANAM

HINDU GUIDED MEDITATIONS FOR PEACE AND ENLIGHTENMENT

This CD contains simple, practical, step-by-step, guided meditations following age-old Hindu spiritual traditions that have evolved various universal meditation techniques for aspirants of differing aptitudes.

With moving hymns and musical performances by accomplished artists, Swami Medhasananda of the Vedanta Society of Japan incorporates Vedic prayers, mantras and chanting in these narrated meditations in both the Bhakti Yoga (The Path of Devotion) and Jnana Yoga (Path of Knowledge) traditions. Various segments of each meditation are presented on separate tracks that can be easily programmed by the aspirant on a CD player.

Bhakti Yoga (Path of Devotion) Tracks

1. Opening Music
2. Pranam Mantra
3. Sitting and Other Preparations
4. Chanting of 'Om'
5. Breathing Practice, Prayer for All, Contemplations on God
6. Meditation on God with BGM
7. Concluding Guidance

Jnana Yoga (Path of Knowledge) Tracks

8. Opening Hymn
9. Sitting and Other Preparations, Prayer for All, Chanting of 'Om'
10. Discrimination and Meditation
11. Meditation with Chanting of 'Om'
12. Concluding Guidance
13. Closing Hymn

Total Playing Time: 78'12"

The CD is available through the <www.Vedanta.jp> website or ask your bookstore. Price in Japan ¥2,000 and US\$12.00 outside Japan.



Shamisen Performance: The Four Seasons of Japan
Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music

University Students:

Sakio Kawai
Asako Watanabe
Rika Satoh
Tomoko Nishino
Akane Yada

Japanese Devotees:

Kaori Izumida
Yasuko Urata
Hiromi Shinohara
Toshimi Ito
Masanori Hisamoto (tabla)



Japanese Devotional Songs



Traditional Ainu Music

Kanto Utari-Kai Members:

Mikiko Maruko
Tomoko Yahata
Kiyoko Kitahara
Akemi Shimada
Chihiro Maruko

Indian Devotees:

Jaya Natarajan
Gayathri Mohan
Latha Balasubramanian
Meena Mohan



Indian Devotional Songs

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