



# वर्द्धेव चोन्नतं द्युर्लभं वाचं Sūktā

## सूक्ता

Summer 2020

### Inside this Issue

Article by Pujya Swamiji

Vedanta in the Time of the Coronavirus  
by Swamini-ji

### Gurukulam News

Bhūma Vidyā

Swamini-ji's Teaching on Covid-19  
Māyā Pañcakam

### Reflections

Śravaṇam

Īśvar-izing of the Coronavirus

Fish Waiting for Bait

Accepting Covid-19 as Karuṇa

Vedanta in Times of Covid-19

The C-Virus: A Story

### Regular Features

Swamini-ji's Teaching Schedule

Contact Information



## Viveka

by Pujya Swami Dayananda-ji

Life experiences are very important. They teach a lot, because both pleasant and unpleasant experiences teach, but only for a person who has an examining mind, an inquiring mind. Otherwise, experiences make you aged, not wiser. They make you aged and tired. Someone asked me, “Are you not coming to the States this year?” I said, “This year I am too aged, next year I will come.” When one is a seeker, one must examine experiences.

One is a seeker, not to remain a seeker; one is a seeker in order to have the cessation of seeking - the fulfillment of seeking. Let us say I am seeking satisfaction. What kind of satisfaction? One that is lasting, otherwise I would be dissatisfied. How do you get it? It cannot be a *karma-phala*, the result of action. Lasting satisfaction cannot be a *karma-phala*

because *karma-phala* will only give you temporary satisfaction. It can give you dissatisfaction also, and thank God that is also temporary!

Without this *karma-phala* I also have a permanent dissatisfaction. That is the very basis of this seeking. That I want satisfaction means that I have dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction with what? Is there such a thing as satisfaction other than you? There is no satisfaction as an object. There is no object that is called satisfaction, it is centered on yourself. If it is not an object, then it should be the subject. This is what I say centered on yourself. It has nothing to do with any object. Even that you get satisfaction in the wake of something, that satisfaction is centered on yourself.

Dissatisfaction also is centered on yourself. I am dissatisfied. With what? With my job. Suppose the job is satisfying, it will be that I am dissatisfied, with my children, with my marriage. When are you not dissatisfied? I am dissatisfied with the world, the world of people, their behavior, their thinking, their beliefs. Everything gets me dissatisfied.

You have to change the world, change people, change situations, manipulate and keep them in such a way that you'll be satisfied. We ask the politician to behave like this, you want to make the religious leader think like this, the traffic should be like this, otherwise you sit in the car and get angry, even though nothing happens when you do. Everything you want to change.

But, you cannot manipulate the world to your satisfaction because patterns change, thinking changes. But in spite of this situation when I cannot make it change to my satisfaction, I still sometimes pick up satisfaction. This is a clue, that in spite of all these things, I become satisfied. What does this convey to you? For a thinking person it should mean, that I do not require to change the world in order to be satisfied; in spite of all these dissatisfying situations, I pick up now and then a moment of satisfaction. If I am satisfied now, I do not need to change the world, because so many things I cannot change. So without changing the world completely, if I find a moment of satisfaction, that tells me that satisfaction does not require any change.

Our example is a copper pot that is so old that it became totally black. One man thought it was a tin pot. Then in one corner the copper was visible. His previous conclusion was that it was a tin pot, and as he was looking at the pot, he saw one edge was copper, the color of copper. Previously he held a tin pot, but looking at the same pot, which had the color of a rusted tin, he says, "It is a copper pot!" That

is called *jñānam*, knowledge, that it is a copper pot. This momentary satisfaction makes me see I am satisfaction. Satisfaction is centered on me. Whether it is for a moment or forever, it is centered on me. It is not centered on a changing object. If it is centered on me, then satisfaction is lasting, because I am lasting. Dissatisfaction is centered on me also, but that "me" is different. The "me satisfaction" is one me, "me dissatisfaction" is another me. There is a basic me and a psychological me. The psychological me will go on appeasing,

satisfying. It has to be dealt with, of course.

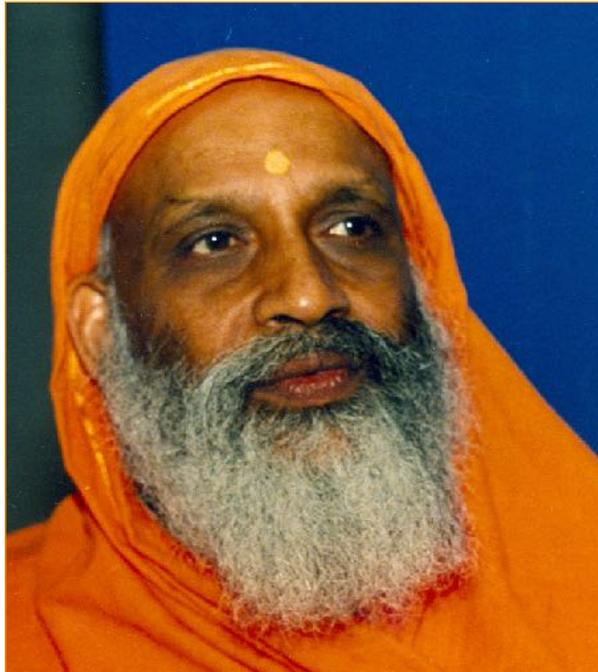
You cannot transcend it; you have to deal with that. It is a part of the Vedānta *śāstra*.

So two "me-s" are there. Dissatisfaction has always got a cause. Satisfaction has no cause, it is centered on the basic me. That means it is not created. Dissatisfaction is created by some situation, by somebody. Satisfaction is not created. Even if in the wake of something I am satisfied, it only looks like that; there is no object for satisfaction. Dissatisfaction you have a reason to complain, but there is no object for satisfaction. Look for it. The subject is satisfaction. I am looking for satisfaction, lasting satisfaction. If it has to last it has to be me.

There was a golden pot. Somehow this golden pot came to thinking that it was a brass pot.

Even if you told it what it was, it would not

believe you. When one asked the pot what it wanted, it said it wanted to be golden. "I want to be forever a golden pot." You want to be gold here in this place, or in that place? "I want to be golden everywhere. I do not care where I am, who I am sitting with, these are all inconsequential, I want to be gold forever." The only way to be gold forever, is to already be gold, because otherwise it cannot be forever.



Therefore, you want to be what you already are. That means that I have ignorance and error. That is called *avidya*, ignorance and error. If you want to be lasting satisfaction, at all places, forever, in all situations, that means that you must be satisfaction. Satisfaction is not an object. Satisfaction is you. You are away from satisfaction not by the nature of yourself, you are away from satisfaction by sheer mistake, ignorance and error. You take yourself to be this body, senses and mind. They can give rise to dissatisfaction, not because of them doing anything. You take them to be you and then dissatisfaction begins. Because there are reasons. Anybody's body leaves much to be desired, there is a dissatisfaction based on limitation. The body is limited by place, by time, by being what it is — limited.

The world outside is dissatisfied and there is enough reason within yourself also to be dissatisfied. Our power of memory is dissatisfied — the power of memory came to light when you started Panini! With everything the mind is dissatisfied. This body-mind-sense complex should not be taken lightly, it sets you up as a seeker. Mr. "I", on whom is centered satisfaction, goes about searching for satisfaction and now and then gets it. His own satisfaction he gets a window into and has a peep, and it is gone. It is like a dog biting a dried bone and enjoying it.

I ask the dog, "What are you doing?"

"Oh, I am enjoying this meat." This is said in my dog voice, okay?

"Hey, it is a dried bone."

"It is not a dried bone; it is meat."

"It is not meat; I see the bone."

"How do you say it is a dry bone? I get blood. From dried bone you do not get blood, and I get blood, therefore, it should be meat."

A dog can afford to have logic like that. A human being cannot afford it. The dog bites the dry bone and in the process its own mouth bleeds. It tastes the blood and imbues the source of the blood to the bone. And this is the momentary satisfaction that we have — we imbue the object with the satisfaction, but that satisfaction is you. You are satisfaction, logically, and examining experiences one should develop a dispassion.

We are after things that do not last, that cannot last. Even through these things, when I get some satisfaction, it is only myself. These momentary satisfactions are just myself. Reason points that out by showing that in spite of all these problems we have, we are able to pick up a momentary satisfaction. Satisfaction is in spite of situations which cannot give satisfaction. Therefore, I can conclude I am on a wrong track. My track of seeking will not lead to what I seek. I seek lasting satisfaction. Even *vaidika karmas* for taking one to desirable places, will not do the trick.

Satisfaction is not the result of *karma* because all *karma-phala*, from whatever type of *karma*, are limited, they are momentary, they do not last. *Karmas* are only meant for *antaḥ karaṇa śuddhi*, preparing oneself for this knowledge.

I want lasting satisfaction. You cannot say, "I do not want it to be lasting." One fellow will say, "I want temporary satisfaction." Why? "Because I should have temporary satisfaction at least." He does not think he can get more. Therefore the *vivekī*, the discriminating person, must have *vairāgya*, dispassion. May he have dispassion towards all of them — not hatred, but objectivity. Let the person be objective to all these experiences, these objects, as they are. I want lasting satisfaction and therefore, I have a frame of mind which is ideal for this knowledge.



## Editorial

All that is here, is *Īśvara*. For all the as-though differences and divisions that one observes in the world, there is nothing but *Īśvara*. These as-though differences have the potential to become an issue only when they are taken to be real when they are blamed for helplessness and hopelessness. The more one is identified with difference, the less one is identified with the truth of oneself as whole, limitless, and free from fear and a sense of lack. When one understands that what is, is *Īśvara*, the whole attitude changes. There is freedom to observe, to be in keeping with the order that is *Īśvara*, including ethics, and the roles we play, rather than a victim.

The understanding of oneself as whole, is expounded beautifully in the text *Dr̥g-Dr̥śya-Viveka*. As the title indicates it is an exposition of the seer and the seen and begins in the very first verse with a *mahāvākya*, a statement that shows the oneness between the individual and the Lord, *Īśvara*. Starting with the seeker's initial understanding of self, it is pointed out that forms and colors are seen, *dr̥śya*, while the eye is the seer, *dr̥k*. This understanding is negated as one is told that the eye is actually also *dr̥śya*, its *dr̥k* being the mind. And then again, before one can identify with the changing mind, the author points out that the mind itself is *dr̥śya*, its *dr̥k* the *sākṣī*, the witness, that which brings everything to light. This *dr̥k* alone is never seen. As such it is non-separate from *Īśvara*. In this way the author, traditionally held to be Adi Śaṅkara, both draws a parallel between the individual and *Īśvara* as well as shows how to correct the seeker's vision through a series of steps; negating the body, the senses and the mind to arrive at the limitless, self-revealing, and unchanging, 'I'.

Recognizing that what is objectified exists only in the light of this 'I,' everything is as-though *Īśvar*-ized. Seeing *Īśvara* in everything allows one to live objectively, to understand what one can and cannot change, and to accept that which cannot be changed. As the world comes to grips with *Īśvara* in the form of the corona virus, such objectivity allows one the space to live without pressure and angst knowing that this too is *Īśvara*. If you would like to watch Swamini-ji's unfolding of *Dr̥g-Dr̥śya-Viveka* in its entirety, please click [here](#) for a list of links to the classes.



## Vedanta in the Time of the Coronavirus

by Swamini Svatmavidyananda-ji



This is an excerpt from a talk given online at the beginning of the pandemic shutdown, in late March, 2020.

One day, I had to contact somebody. I was going to their city to give a talk. I was going there the next month to meet them at the *gurukulam*. I said, "What is your phone number?" And the person said, "I do not know. It must be somewhere inside the phone, let me look."

This is what it is -- one has a huge digital footprint, like a virtual footprint, while being virtually disconnected from oneself, and from the whole. This disconnection has become so costly that, really, Bhagavan has taken it seriously and decided to intervene. Up till now, He/She was quiet. People would ask me, whenever I taught the 4th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita where it says that Bhagavan will come, "How come Bhagavan has not come? Look at how difficult it is." I said, "It is

because we are still studying the Gita, we are still studying Vedanta. That is why Bhagavan is taking it easy.”

### **Intervention, in the form of a virus**

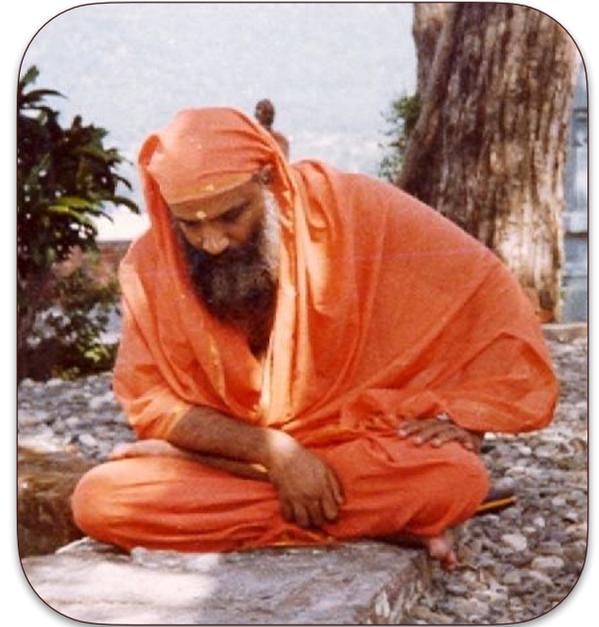
But now, no longer. Bhagavan has decided to intervene. And the whole world has been upended in a way that we have never seen before, and I doubt if we will see again in our lifetime. This is really a very crucial juncture, spiritually, economically, politically -- in every which way. It is a crisis. And the crisis is not happening now, that is why I call it the *karuṇa*-virus, because the crisis has already been going on. Right now, we are at a place where we are being seen in a way we never were. We are seeing ourselves in a way that we never did. We are taking ourselves seriously like we never did before, and that inner crisis is now being shown, through this small, little tiny thing called virus.

It is supposed to be the enemy, and all these *kṣatriya* metaphors are there in the discussion of this *karuṇa*-virus. What are these *kṣatriya* metaphors? “This is a war, we have to fight, we have to survive, this is an enemy, we have to kill the enemy!” The virus says, “Ok, go ahead, kill me. Where are you going to kill?” If you say, “I am going to go to China,” then it says, “Ok, I will go somewhere else.” If you look at the descriptions of Bhagavan in the *śāstra*, you see *sarva-vyāpi*, all pervasive.



There are some very interesting paradoxes. First of all, this virus is everywhere, so where are you going to go? This is supposed to be the enemy, but if you are in a battlefield the enemy is very clear. Even when we had a similar kind of a crisis, like 9/11 -- that also was seen as a drastic change -- still it was localized and you could blame somebody. You could say, “Ok, these people from this

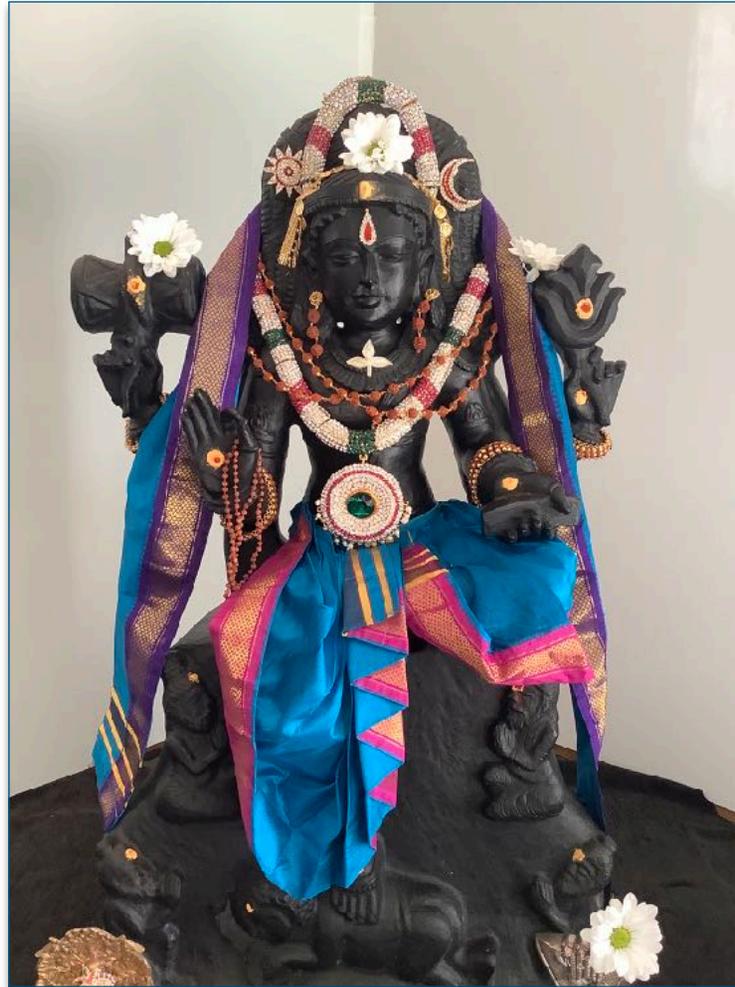
country, or with these kinds of extremist beliefs,” and you could put a finger on that. Here there is nobody to blame, but here there is this thing that you are supposed to fight. You do not know where to go, you do not know how to go about it. So, we are at a very crucial juncture. That is the first paradox. Here you have crafted yourself as a warrior, and a warrior is a doer, of course. One is attached to the doing, one is completely in love with the doing, but what are you going to do?



That brings me to the second point, the best way to “defeat” this enemy, is to sit at home and do nothing. Very interesting. That, people are not used to, especially in the West. Because if you are defeating something, you have to go, you have to fight, you have to “do”, you have to gain some accolades. But here, the best way is to sit and not do anything. We do not know how to not do anything, we do not know the art of being. We only know the art of doing, and where has that gotten us? That has brought us to a lot of confusion, nowhere else, just a lot of confusion. So, that is the second paradox. The second paradox is that this “enemy” has to be defeated, by sitting still. Absolutely still. Look at this *karuṇa*-virus, it is making everybody into a *yogī*, from a *bhogī*. *Bhogī* means one who does *bhoga*, conspicuous consumption. That is *bhoga*. *Yogī*, means the one who is a mindful consumer, the one who is in the middle, the one who is intent on joining oneself with the whole. That is what a *yogi* is. So, it is turning everyone from a *bhogī* into a *yogī*.

Whole countries are shut down. India, 1.3 billion people, shut down completely. What a massive exercise in lockdown! The U.S. also, about half of the people are *yogīs*, at home -- the home that they did not even visit, except to go to sleep at night. That was all it was, and one rarely saw one's children, one rarely enjoyed one's spouse, one rarely did anything connected to that. One was just going, going, going, and now it is at a total standstill.

This kind of a total standstill of the world is an opportunity to graduate from the first to the last portion of the Veda. This is an opportunity, because no other time will this opportunity be created. It has not been, so far. It is almost like the maker of this universe, out of Her/His compassion for our predicament as disconnected, disenchanted and alienated beings, has given us this opportunity to reset ourselves, from being the people who are addicted to running around and doing, and going and going, to being masters of the art of being. It is inviting us, from pursuing and conquering outer kingdoms of some kind of fanfare, name, fame, etc., to being the masters of the inner kingdom. This is what in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad is called *svarājya*. *Svarājya* means one's own inner kingdom. One is invited to become master of the inner kingdom, to have an inner mastery so that one is ready to see that which Is -- that which is real. That which is real, ultimately, is yourself. It is you. And that which is real, is what is called *Īśvara*, Brahman, *ātman*, *ātma*, *saccidānanda* -- all these are just synonyms. These are all synonyms, and this is what



has to be understood as the truth of oneself, as one traverses this journey.

This inner journey has become very easy, because everything that is outside, is totally shut down. You cannot go see a movie, you cannot go to have dinner in a restaurant. You cannot go and do this, you cannot go and do that. You cannot go there, you cannot go here. Even the grocery store -- you go and you are afraid after coming back. It has come to a place where every house has now become a potential ashram. Somebody asked me, "How are you doing in the lockdown?" I said, "Welcome to my life." Where did I go before, other than to teach? Nowhere else.

So, this is a kind of an enforced *sannyāsa*. *Sannyāsa* means giving up. It is an enforced *sannyāsa*, not a *sannyāsa* that is taken out of the desire to study this, or the desire to lead this life of oneness. It is an enforced *sannyāsa*, where you may not be wearing orange but definitely you have been asked to stay put in one place and

not really go around anywhere.

Therefore, this is an opportunity to look at something that is not at the surface level. On the surface, one sees chaos, one sees a pandemic; more than the pandemic one sees pandemonium. Basically, how do we face this pandemic without pandemonium? That is what is taught by Vedanta. That is what the message of this pandemic is, that is what the message of Vedanta is: how to face this with equanimity, how to understand this. This is also, I suppose, Vedanta in day-to-day life.

# BHŪMA VIDYĀ

by Subhasri Venkatesan



Sri Gurubhyo Namaha  
In the beginning of this year, we had a wonderful opportunity to study with Swamini-ji at the Gurukulam.

The topic was ‘Bhūma Vidya’ from Chāndogya Upaniṣad where the *samvāda*, teaching, was between Nārada, the scholarly sage, and Sanatkumāra, the one who got the knowledge directly from Dakṣiṇāmūrti. Nārada

asked Sanatkumāra to teach him by ‘recalling’ what was taught to him by the Lord. Swamini-ji unraveled the symbolism here. The usage of the word *adhīhi*, highlights that the original teaching of *Īśvara* is being transferred through the lineage. And Nārada, an exalted sage himself who had mastered all the four Vedas and a lot of other subjects, had declared himself to know only *mantra vidyā* and asked Sanatkumāra to teach him *ātma-vidyā*, so he too can be an *ātmavit*, one who knows the *ātman*, and cross the ocean of sorrow.

The pedagogy as unfolded by Swamini-ji is called ‘*sākhā-candra-nyāya*.’ The student is helped here in a way similar to the help offered to locate the little crescent moon by pointing to branches of a tree in that direction, leading one to locate the moon.

Before moving onto the verses of the Upaniṣad, Swamini-ji explained the meaning of Bhūma. Bhūma a masculine word means infinite.

Swamini-ji employed a step-by-step approach to help us understand the meaning of this rather profound word.

The knower, *pramāta*, and the known, *prameya*, are nothing but the superimposing of *Īśvara* on the respective objects, and the means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*, too, is nothing but *Īśvara*.

If one can see the order in everything, one can see that it is *Īśvara*. Swamini-ji helped us to see this point through a simple example. This in fact made me recall one of Pujya Swami-ji’s examples, that if one had an early childhood trauma the resulting anxiety in adulthood it is due to the order. This has nothing to do with the individual. This intelligent order includes everything, in other words, it is infinite, and that infinite is *Īśvara*.

Now, back to the verse; Nārada was told by Santkumāra to look into happiness, as every being works to get happiness. Anything that is finite cannot provide happiness forever; it must come to an end. It is only a *duḥkha-bijam*, source of grief, whereas the infinite, on the other hand, is the source of happiness. That infinite, Bhūma, is oneself and which alone is to be looked into.

The next *mantra*, as Swamini-ji said, was the *lakṣaṇa* of Bhūma. Sanatkumāra told Nārada, Bhūma is that in which nothing else is seen, nothing else is heard, that which has swallowed up the subject-object difference. It rests on its own glory. That which is self-evident, self-effulgent does not need anything to lean on. This glory is not about worldly accumulation of wealth, such as cows, horses, gold etc., but the glory that is totally independent of anything. This Bhūma is everywhere, in all directions. And ‘I,’ *ātman*, is not separate from that Bhūma. The one who sees this without a shadow of doubt is *ātmaratiḥ*, enjoying being oneself without requiring to be entertained by anybody or anything. That person is the master of the kingdom of the self and has whatever they want not being separate from anything. On the other hand, the one who thinks, “I am finite,” is under the control of others and is subject to limitations.

# Śravaṇam

by RamaGiri Rondeau

In the 1935 movie, “Man on a Flying Trapeze”, we witness one particular but typical day in the life of Ambrose Wolfinger, a memory-expert. We watch his desires, defenses, choices, and actions, and like him we witness the seen results of his activities. However, unlike Ambrose, we also witness the responses and actions of others and the various karmic results unfolding at home while he is away.

Ambrose’s known world does not include any of the day’s unexpected events at home. For the family, the things happening are not understood and misunderstood. Ambrose, his personal plans thwarted, returns home at the end of his disastrous day, worse off than when he left. He has been done-in by his own desires and actions. Returning home Ambrose is interrogated by his wife. Without acknowledging his own role in all that has occurred, W.C. Fields as Ambrose responds, “Things happened.”

Things happened! Those two, too few words describe our reality today, this time of pandemic pressures. It is what it is; things happen. We must live objectively in this new now known reality. Our actions have unstoppable consequences. Still as Swamini-ji says, the corona virus is Bhagavan shouting, “Stop!” “Listen, just stop.”

In the movie, Ambrose stops being as he has been and becomes uncharacteristically self-assertive. The movie ends, Ambrose’s life has changed for the better. But this is just a movie. In real life we act but do not preview the script, nonetheless we can listen to the director.

In 2007 things happened in my known world. I first heard Sadhvi Chaitanya-ji speak that April and have been listening to Swami Svatmavidyananda-ji since. The simple action of showing up to listen, repeatedly, has resulted in changes I could never have imagined. In my wildest dreams or desires I never foresaw listening from another continent, another hemisphere, another understanding. We are all well

taught. I may not be well learned but I am learning, listening to learn.

I listen because *śrāvāṇa*, listening, is my *sādhana*, discipline, my *upāsana*, worship. *Śraddhā*, trust pending understanding, is my *upāya*, remedies.

Every listening reveals more for

consideration. Every listening results in subtle changes; something happens. When Guru-ji’s

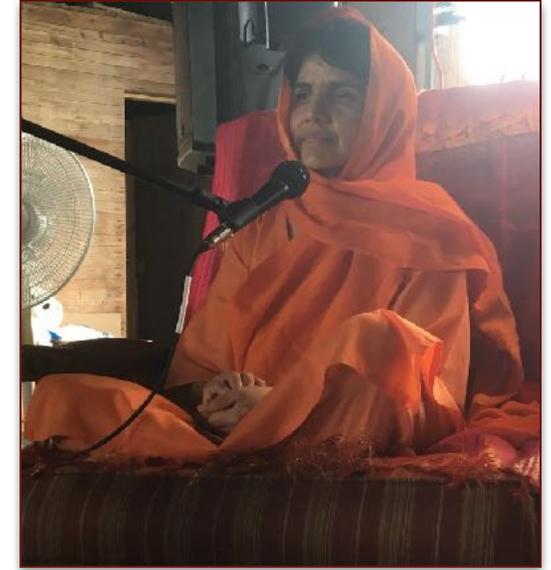
words stop a single happening, a single doing, a single wrong thought, the entire known world changes.

A virus small, subtle, unseen and surely not sought, has brought change to the world. Fear, anxiety, anger, *avidyā* and more are large results manifest in people and society, born from the unseen cause. An unseen vaccine is needed.

Swamini-ji talked about the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Bhagavad Gita. A psychologist or theologian may make one think “I know the self” or “I know God”, but it takes Guru-ji and *śāstra* to reveal the identity of oneness. Otherwise this knowledge is quite unthinkable. When listening to Guru-ji things happen, or stop happening.

In that class I was caught, taught I ought to know all without pressure. If my mind is not empty, my desires not dashed, no problem — when I know the pressure of their presence is passing into mist. Things happened? No pressure! That is something to keep in memory.

Words, subtle and unseen, when wielded by the wise-one change the known world. The sought self, subtle and unseen, shines in the silence



of listening. Unseen words cause seen changes in *jīva*'s, individual's, known world as the storyline, the unfolding *prārabdha karma*, changes around the self. When one is still and listens for it, Guru-ji's words selflessly shine in the mind. The self continuously shines in the center of change and you know it.

Corona virus is small, its results limited. Guru-ji's word is huge, resulting in the limitless.

## Īśvar-izing of the Coronavirus

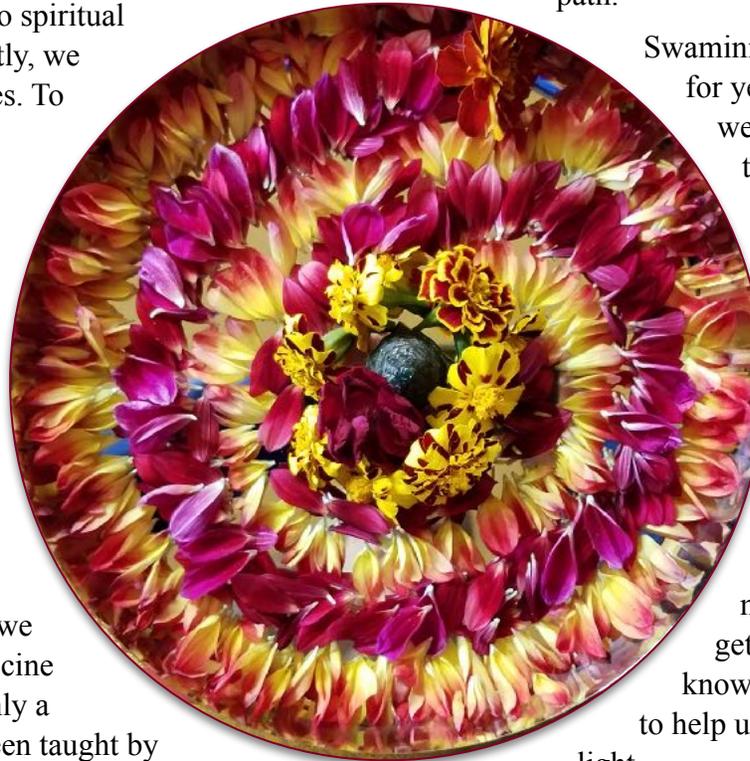
by Chris Almond

After studying with Swamini-ji, I have often asked myself, how can people live in this world with no access to spiritual wisdom, especially at times like this? Recently, we have seen the virus ravage our physical bodies. To an even greater degree, triggered by circumstances, we have seen people experience suffering at the mental level and express all kinds of destructive behaviors. I do not think it is a stretch to say that the effects of ignorance have hit a high tide not previously seen in our lifetimes.

Even for students of Vedanta, we have been challenged to continue to see through the veil of these uncomfortable experiences and remain identified with that ever present, ever available happy being that we know ourselves to be. To remind ourselves of who we are under such conditions, we require the vaccine of a prayerful life and proper thinking that only a *guru* can provide. Fortunately, we have all been taught by Swamini-ji and she has empowered us to be prepared for such a time. As she is an embodiment of the *śāstra*, her own *guru* and a life

masterfully related to *Īśvara* in all things, we are blessed to be able to reflect on her teachings and life and follow them accordingly till they are completely natural to us.

As is typical of Swamini-ji's style, I want to relate some of what she has given to us post Corona virus. I will never forget the first class I heard from her after all this started happening. Not only did she *Īśvar-ize* the virus, she *avatar-ized* the virus. That was mind-blowing even knowing ahead of time that she would go in that general direction. What polar opposite thinking compared to the conventional wisdom! What a way to inoculate the mind from the harm we could do by rejecting the virus. What a powerful armor she has given us by showing that Corona is actually an embodiment of *karuna*(compassion) given by *Īśvara* to set the world on a gentler path.



Swamini-ji has been building that protection of ours for years. Every teaching is like a new piece that wears away the weakness of samsaric thinking. It is a resplendent and dynamic protectant that allows us to love others and do what must be done while remaining aware that we are doing nothing at all, but simply observing the drama of the self 'as though' play its variations in awareness. How lucky we are to have so many channels of reruns and recycled plots to watch! What a joy life can be with this vision! Even in moments of weakness, when the show turns dark as it must, and a little bit of darkness seems to get through, we can all rest comfortably, knowing her words will come to us when needed to help us parry away the darkness and reveal the light.

The words of the *guru* hold such power. I knew it intuitively but could not imagine how they would actually function to protect and open our hearts; I only had hope and some *śraddhā*. This was my prayer from meeting her and being initially mesmerized by Swamini-ji's knowledge: may I know what she knows, may I see what she sees, and may I assimilate her knowledge in the life alone. To have that vision today from her guidance is something which can never be fully repaid, I can only hope to express my appreciation by living in ways that are consistent with what she has given.

To that end, today my prayer is: Lord give me the strength and wisdom to live a life centered on the love and compassion that Swamini-ji has shown us through her life. May this armor of right thinking be seeded with that same selfless love she has shown to us and grow in service to others who are myself alone. May this vision of non-duality be enjoyed in the mind and expressed through tireless enthusiasm for all that life has to offer; may I never reject any manifestation of the self as she taught me long ago.

## Fish Waiting for Bait

by Prasad Garimalla

In each one of us is a fish that is waiting to catch a bait. The bait is nothing but the various opportunities provided by the outside world for us to get angry, disappointed, upset, insulted, etc. And the fish is our unconscious mind shaped as it is by unresolved issues in our past, our binding desires and dislikes, etc. How do we deal with this situation? By taking the fish to a dentist and getting all its teeth removed!!

This teaching was the highlight in one of the Vedāntaṇḍima classes of Swamini-ji that I was lucky enough to hear recently. I got lucky in two senses: one, because a devotee of Swamini-ji had the foresight to upload that class to YouTube five years ago (maybe just for me?); and

two, I was able to win the battle over my mind at the time when faced with competing viewing choices in Netflix and Amazon Prime.

I can confidently say that, but for a consistent stream of Swamini-ji's wise words flowing into my ears in these unprecedented times that we are all facing together, Covid would have already added my mind to its long list of victims and growing.



"Stretch your heart to accommodate entire galaxies" is another gem among many of Swamini-ji's statements one is privileged to hear in her classes. *Kṣānti*, accommodation, is born of clear knowledge that everyone comes with a background. If someone is behaving in a particular way at a given time, s/he has no choice to behave otherwise due to his/her background. *Īśvara's* psychological order governs behavior. That being infallible, how silly

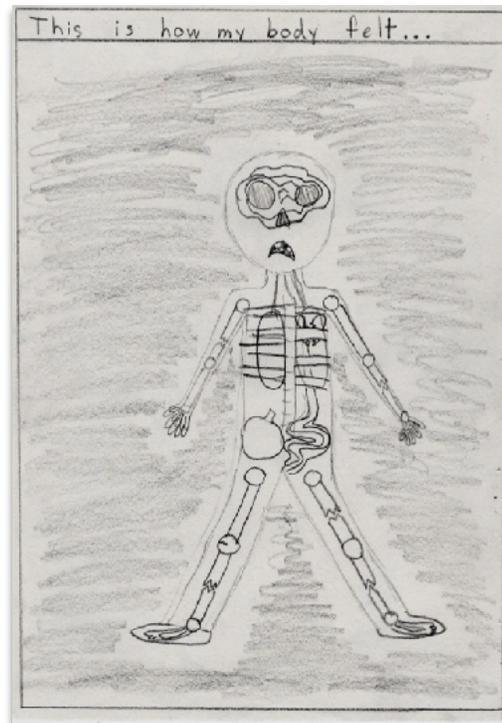
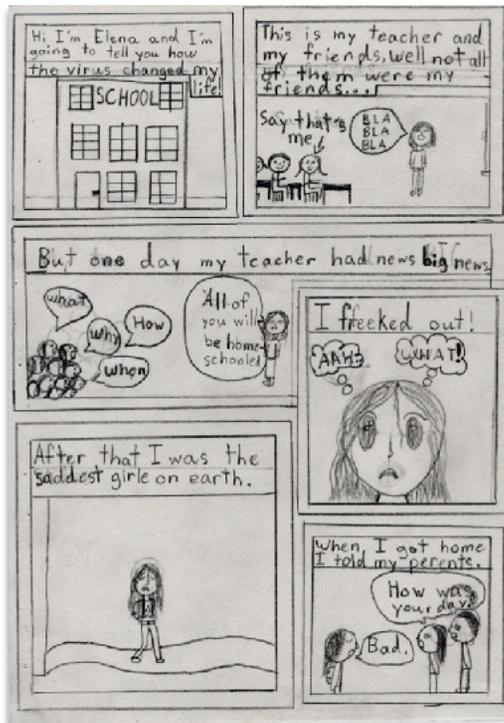
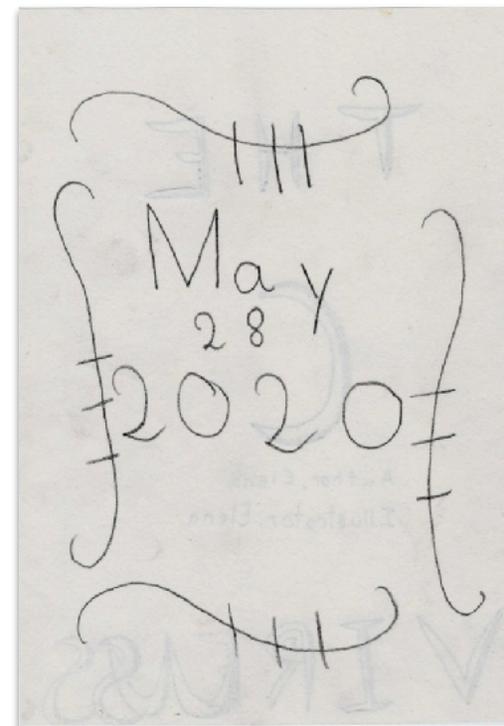
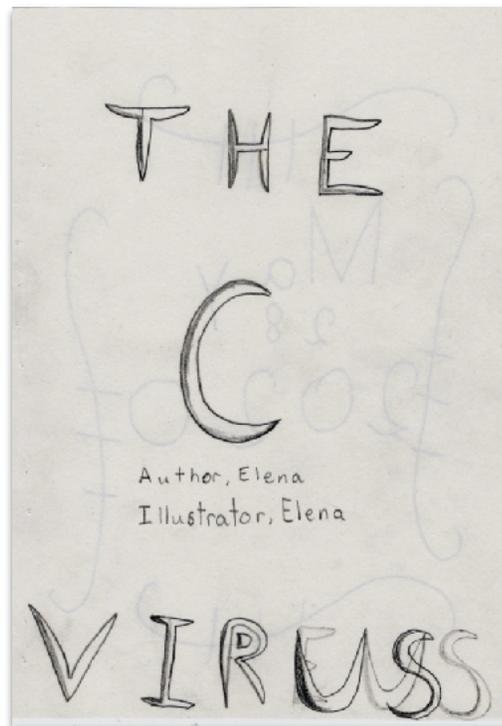
is it for one to expect it to be different? As we practice more and more accommodation, the more time and energy we remain with to do an inside job on ourselves, i.e., pulling out the fish's teeth! This job being easier said than done, a quick prayer to *Īśvara* always helps: please bless me to have more *Īśvara* in me and less of myself. Swamini-ji recommends such a prayer as soon as one wakes up and before one goes about the day.

My humble prostrations at Swamini-ji's feet!

OM TAT SAT

A Story by  
Elena\*  
Age 9

\*Elena attended some of Swamini-ji's public talks with her mother.





# Accepting Covid-19 as Karuṇa

by Kate Herse

When I first learned how serious the Corona virus was, my initial reaction was fear — fear of sickness and possible death for me or my loved ones; fear for all the people who were going to lose their livelihoods; fear for my own financial security. I feared I did not have the courage it would take to face the dreadful new order this virus was bringing about in the world.

I also experienced some anger — anger at having to cancel the travel that I had been planning for some time, not knowing if or when it could be postponed to later; anger at not being able to spend time with the people I cared about; anger at having to be so careful about going out of the house, even for the most basic provisions; anger about not being able to find all of those provisions on the shelves. And anger that I did not own a mask and was unsuccessful at making one on my own!

So it came as a bit of surprise to me to hear Swamini-ji talk of the virus as a blessing, and even call it the “*karuṇa*” virus. “*Karuṇa*” means compassion — how could this virus be seen as compassionate?

I listened to several talks by Swamini-ji at the beginning of the lockdown period, in early April of this year, where she addressed the virus situation as it applied to students of Vedanta. I was also asked to edit transcriptions of some of these talks, and I have read and re-read the transcriptions.

Vedanta had already taught me that the virus needed to be seen in keeping with *Īśvara*'s order and accepted as such, and I knew that anger was not the kind of reaction a Vedantin should have. I also

knew the anger would go away if I did not feed it, and eventually it did. I did not feed the fear either, and it gradually decreased. But seeing the virus as a blessing was going to take a little more effort — or so I thought.

All at once, after all the travel plans had been cancelled and all my loved ones seemed to be in safe situations, I noticed that the sun was still coming up every day, the rain was falling at the proper time, and

spring was happening as usual. I was somewhat awed by that. I was even more awed by realizing that everyone in the world was experiencing this crisis, and that it was actually promoting a feeling of oneness, in that we were all suddenly vulnerable to the same thing at the same time. People were reaching out to communicate with each other. I heard from so many friends and relatives from various parts of the world. People were just checking in with each other — it was beautiful.

I started appreciating not being able to travel. Travel, even when it is for leisure, involves a lot of pressure — pressure of planning and making arrangements; pressure of meeting the timetables established, once you are on your way. Without those pressures bearing down on me, I started to feel a kind of euphoric decompression happening in me. I found that I liked staying home. I liked having the time to do things slowly and mindfully.

I enjoyed having time to just reflect — and

working on those transcriptions gave me a lot to reflect on!

In other words, I was starting to understand the blessing that Swamini-ji had been talking about, and it really did not take any effort at all! In one of the talks she expressed her hope and prayer that when we come out the virus, there would be less dysfunction in our world. I guess it remains to be seen, but from my experience, it seems there is reason to share that hope.



# Vedanta in Times of Covid-19

by Vivian Crespo-Almond

As a decade long student of Vedanta under the compassionate wings of Swamini Svātmaavidyananda-ji, I count myself lucky to be prepared for what is, and KNOW why. My initial response to this pandemic was a trust that whatever may come was needed in the *vyāvahārika* realm. But, at times I do get a small pang of anxiety in the pit of my stomach wondering if I can take whatever scary things may happen to me. That is when I remember the most mind-blowing words Swamini-ji ever said to me: “YOU ARE NOT YOUR FEELINGS; THEY ARE JUST A FORM OF THOUGHT.”



You see, dear spiritual fellows, as a Westerner and even more as a Latina, the thought that I am “MY FEELINGS” was drilled into my mind. Feelings were epitomized as the litmus test of human-hood. I was raised thinking this is what made me different from animals. Once I moved to the U.S. from a third world urban environment, I could see that pets in America demonstrated quite a bit of feelings and intelligence. Documentaries, and reading did the rest. Mainstream yoga had also taught me that I am not my thoughts. However, it did not dawn on me that there was this discrepancy in my understanding of what it meant to be human till Swamini-ji pointed it out. Thank god for her knowledge because suddenly some ignorance finally dropped. I had been studying Vedanta for a short time in those days and the pot/ clay, rope/snake metaphors hit me like a bolt of lightning.

Instead of feeling like a Nothing, without identifying with my feelings or thoughts, an inkling of what “I” really meant shone through.

The next thing that helped me was Swamini-ji’s suggestion to allow a “SPACE” between me and my feelings and thoughts. They are me but I am not them.  $A=B$  but  $B$  does not equal  $A$ . This is a trickier stance in the social current of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It seems to me that for people to relate to each other, not only do they expect my compassion and loyalty, but also my allegiance to their world view. I know these measures will not help from personal experience and from world history. But I also know that *ahimsa* is an important value in my pursuit of a dharmic life. However, it also is wonderful that we are studying this vision in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, because the current fields of astrophysics, quantum mechanics and even bio-quantum mechanics point to our limitations. The fact that our five *indriyas*, senses, need all kinds of enhancements is mind-blowing. Tech inventions (Large Hadron Collider, Hubble telescope, atomic microscopes, C.T. scanners, computers, etc.) have allowed for learning and appreciating a world that has always been there. A world that would surely seem impossible or magic to the immediate past generations of humanity. Though, maybe not so much to the wise minds of the ancient past.

*Ahimsa*, the path of least harm, has been of immeasurable guidance in walking the line of *dharma* in my life. Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, Chapter 6, has an amazing list of six-fold virtues (codified from a larger list of preparatory requirements to attain knowledge and therefore, *mokṣa*) that provide extra clarity in playing the different roles of my life (*śama, dama, uparati titikṣā, śraddhā samādhāna*).

I wish for everyone, living in times of Covid-19, to see the wisdom and necessity for what “IS” and the dynamic ways it unfolds. And to find sustenance in the knowledge and teaching of Advaita Vedanta and our wonderful *gurus* that have touched our lives. *Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ*.

# SWAMINI-JI'S TEACHING ON COVID

by Nancy Taylor

In her teaching on the Corona virus in March 2020, Swamini-ji talked about how in every age the world will experience an imbalance which will need to be re-balanced. When this kind of crisis occurs, Swamini-ji reminded us of what Krishna told Arjuna in Chapter 4 of the Bhagavad Gītā where he says that during such times he will come into the world in an embodied avatar. In her teachings, Swamini-ji explained how the Corona virus is actually an avatar rather than a war-waging plague that must be killed. Most of us find the idea of the virus as an avatar difficult to believe because we are inundated with information that tells us that the virus is trying to kill us. So, most of the action towards the virus goes into taking action in destroying it. However, if we are to follow Krishna's sage counsel, should we not pause and consider our actions rather than react to our thoughts? So, let us just suppose for a moment that the Corona virus is an avatar. What happens when we tell the virus, "We are going to kill you." Armed and ready for its counterattack, we are surprised by the virus' response when it says, "Okay. But, you cannot kill me. I will just go somewhere else as I am everywhere, and in everyone." The response presents a conundrum to our strategy of killing it, for it asks us to consider how can we kill something that is in everyone and everywhere? What is the solution to this? Maybe, we need to go back to Chapter 4, Verse 18 of the Bhagavad Gītā where Krishna tells Arjuna that one of the ways to deal with such a paradox is to take action through non-action.

Krishna's advice to act through non-action is challenging, for it asks us to still our minds despite the overwhelming flood of fearful thoughts. Taking a course of non-action seems counter-intuitive, particularly if one is accustomed to living and working in a patriarchal, post-industrial, capitalistic environment where the notion of 'not doing' is dismissed and labeled as passive and non-productive. Swamini-ji suggested in her teachings that we need to come out of this mindset by looking at our



addiction to 'doing' which is actually causing far more distress than non-action. Taking non-action asks the *jīva* to switch from the mindset of a *bhogī*, a consumer, to that of a *yogī*, a mindful being.

Well, that sounds simple enough, but how does one go about adjusting to this mindset? Swamini-ji suggested in her teaching that first, we "Stay home, and enjoy what we have. Enjoy your spouse, children, and loved ones." Then, consciously sit and quiet the mind. When we do this, we may be able to communicate with the virus and understand that it is not an enemy, but Krishna in the form of an avatar bringing *karuṇa* to help us overcome our illusions of separation. Swamini-ji intimated that through non-action, *karuṇa*, in the form of Corona, will actually guide us to the release of our *samsāra*. Through *karuṇa*, we may be able to understand

that the Corona virus does not require us to 'do' something, but rather to sit and open its gifts so that we may re-remember who we really are and our connection to the whole.

While the promise of connection to ultimate reality sounds enticing, the process of going inwardly may not be as appealing, for the path to restoring balance often leads to feelings such as pain, sorrow, doubt, feelings of not belonging, and/or not being a good person. Resetting ourselves requires us to confront these unsettling feelings as they are being thrown into the open. Taking non-action calls for a willingness on our part to go inwardly, and call out these fears, and misconceptions. The path of non-action encourages us to shift through the illusionary and turbulent falsehoods we have crafted over time and see them for what they are, just experiences. It asks us to surrender these false notions to the truth of self-realization so that we can see through the haze of judgment and criticism which has kept us trapped in perpetual cycle of *samsāra*. When we see beyond the illusion of our falsehoods and realign with the truth of who we really are, we can then set ourselves free and re-immense ourselves into the ocean of consciousness that we are and rejoin it as one of its most beloved, infinite and eternal waves.

Non-action allows us to drop into the reality of who we are, and understand the deeper import of the Corona virus. Through this avatar, we can then re-

engage in an intimate dialogue with our “Innerness of Being.” It is from this place, we can pose these questions: What am I here for? What is my purpose? With an open heart and *karuṇa*’s guidance, the answers will be revealed. They may come in many forms and be connected to talents and different ways of expressions you have forgotten. Through the Corona virus teachings and our commitment to non-action, Swamini-ji reminded us to hold to what is revealed about our gifts. Stay focused on these gifts so that they may bring you back into balance. Trust who you are, so that you reset and reconnect to your purpose. Remember the truth about yourself. Start by going within, leaning into the gift of the Corona virus which will open you to your *dharma* with the voice of *karuṇa* as your guide.



existent. Its existence is dependent on *sat*, consciousness, the “is-ness” of everything, manifest and unmanifest. So we say that *Māyā* is non-separate from Bhagavan, but Bhagavan is not *Māyā*.

‘I’ is the *ātman*, the undivided, unchanging one without a second, *saccidānanda*: existence, consciousness and limitless. But, under the spell of *Māyā* we identify with *anātman*, that which is *mithya*, and spin from lifetime to lifetime on the wheel of *samsāra*. *Māyā*, the sorceress of self-ignorance makes the impossible possible. And, because of this veil of self-ignorance, I take myself to be lacking, and inadequate. However, my *svarūpa*, true nature, being limitless, I desire wholeness, limitlessness, not recognizing I am already whole. I look to what

appears as separate from me, and do *karma*, action, to obtain that which I think I lack. From action comes *punya* and *pāpa*, comfortable and uncomfortable situations, which once again give rise to desires. In this way the notion of *samsāra* continues.

Recognizing I am *pūrṇa*, whole, I am content. This knowledge is corrected through this teaching. It is a cognitive shift; the *jagat* does not disappear for the *jñānī*. She or he appreciates the *jagat* for the as-though manifestation of *Īśvara* that it is.

These were some of the highlights for me of Swamini-ji’s talk:

- Behave in sattvic ways as much as possible.
- See everything and everyone as *Īśvara*. Doing this there is no more *Māyā*; there is only *Īśvara*.
- Do not take things personally.
- Forgive yourself for slipping at times, and do not fall prey to hurt, guilt and anxiety. Be kind to yourself.
- All core issues in the subconscious may not have a solution, so lead a prayerful life and surrender to *Īśvara*.
- *Māyā* belongs to empirical reality; it can be unmasked by studying Vedanta.
- With the proper understanding and assimilation of Vedanta, once this veil of ignorance, the *āvarṇa śakti* of *Māyā*, is lifted, one knows oneself as *sat-cit-ananta ātman*, the one and only conscious truth of everything.

## Māyā Pañcakam

by Zarina Kaji

The purpose of every human life is to know the truth about the self. This self-knowledge is as-though shrouded by the veil of *Māyā*, an as-though *śakti* of *Īśvara* that makes the *jagat*, universe, appear as discrete and variegated. The knowledge and “is-ness” of this manifest *jagat* belong to *Īśvara*, while the name and form belong to *Māyā*.

For the *jīva*, the individual, *Māyā* appears as self ignorance, bringing the notion of bondage and limitation on account of the body-mind-sense complex. And, due to the three *guṇas*, *satva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, everyone appears to be unique. The *āvarṇa śakti*, *Māyā*’s veiling power, is like a “mother that smothers,” embracing us so tightly that we are ignorant of the truth of ourselves, and of a resulting strengthening of our identification with the body-mind-sense complex. Self-ignorance is removed through the study of Vedanta.

*Māyā* also possesses *vikṣepa śakti*, the power to project the universe of names and forms. On the individual level, this *śakti* manifests as subjective projection rising from the unconscious mind, and at the total level, the *jagat* is the projection of *Īśvara*. *Māyā* is non-separate from Bhagavan. By definition *Māyā* is *mithya*, that which is not ultimately real, nor is it non-

**Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg**  
**Presents an Online Vedanta Retreat, August 17-27, 2020**  
**with Sri Swamini Svatomvidyanandaji**

**A DIALOGUE FROM THE BṚHADĀRAṆYAKA-UPANIṢAD**  
**WITH SELECTED VERSES FROM SRI SURESVARACHARYA'S VĀRTIKA**  
**Daily 8-9 am and 8-9 pm Eastern US Time**

The Yajnavalkya-Maitreyi dialogue is a shining jewel in the crown of self-knowledge. As Sage Yajnavalkya prepares to leave for the forest to pursue a life of renunciation, he has to reckon with his wife, Maitreyi, who requests instruction in self knowledge, and in whom he finds a fitting candidate for brahmavidyā. The dialogue that follows is an instructive teacher-student interchange that is timelessly pertinent for all seekers. Acharya Suresvara has written a delightful commentary in verse for this Upanishad, which we will selectively study to illumine our understanding, so that the knowledge gained is free of all doubts, vagueness, or errors.

To access the Upanishad text, click [HERE](#) To download the *vārtika*, click [HERE](#)

**DOṢAPARIHĀRĀṢṬAKAM BY ACHARYA SRIDHARA 'AYYAVAL'**  
**Daily 4:00-5:15 pm Eastern US Time**

The doṣa-parihāra-aṣṭakam is a 300 year old Sanskrit composition of the scholar-saint of Tanjavur, Sri Sridhara Venkateshacharya 'Ayyaval'. The word "doṣa" means defect, and "parihāra" means removal. In this aṣṭaka, octet, presented creatively as a conversation with Lord Shiva, Ayyaval invokes the Lord's grace to rid himself of the habit of constantly complaining about situations and finding faults in others. He concludes that this tendency poses a big hindrance to *sarvātmabhāva*, the blessing of the vision of oneness. As long as one is finding fault in others and trying to "fix" them, one can never fully assimilate the truth of the oneself as *Īśvara*, as limitlessly whole and free. This text is a hidden gem in the treasure-chest of Vedanta, whose luminescence is a guiding light for all earnest seekers.

To download the text, please click [HERE](#)

TO JOIN THE ONLINE  
CLASSES, CLICK [HERE](#)

OR GO TO [zoom.us](#) AND  
USE MEETING ID: 835 9574 1746  
PASSCODE 963196

All Are Welcome to Attend

Tips to Reduce Distractions  
During Online *Śravaṇam*:

1. Please plan to attend all sessions. You can catch up on missed sessions at the [Arsha Vidya Youtube Channel](#)
2. Please log in a few minutes before the class starts.
3. Please refrain from browsing the web, multitasking, checking email or social media, while listening to the talks.
4. Please wait until the end of each talk to ask questions.
5. Please download the class texts in advance by clicking on the relevant links.

–OM TAT SAT–



# ADVAITA ACADEMY

ONLINE WEEKEND VEDANTA RETREAT WITH

SRI SWAMINIJI SVATMAVIDYANANDA

## A Mantra from the Kaivalya Upanishad

July 31st-Aug 2nd 2020

July 31st 9-10 pm ET  
Aug 1st 9-10 am & 9-10 pm ET  
August 2nd 9-10 am ET

FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
CLICK [HERE](#)

THIS IS A FREE EVENT, BUT PRIOR  
REGISTRATION IS NEEDED

NOTE: You have to register separately  
for morning and evening talks

REGISTER FOR PM TALKS  
for July 31st pm & Aug 1st pm  
CLICK [HERE](#)

REGISTER FOR AM TALKS  
for Aug 1st am and Aug 2nd am  
CLICK [HERE](#)

## Streamed via Zoom



## Accessing Swamini-ji's Teachings On Line

Classes, unless otherwise indicated, are streamed via adobe connect, accessible via the link below. Once the page opens, select "Enter as a Guest" and type your name in the box that appears. When you click enter you will be taken to the Adobe classroom.

<https://avmtemple.adobeconnect.com/a725965367/gita/>

Past classes are archived at the link below. You can scroll through the topics and select the series that you wish to watch. All the recordings for each class will be found in the one file. A list of links can be found at the second link.

<https://livestream.com/Swamini-ji>

[https://www.dropbox.com/s/qp97ljr1m7jz27e/  
ArchivedClass Updated Links.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/qp97ljr1m7jz27e/ArchivedClassUpdatedLinks.pdf?dl=0)

To ensure that you have the most up to date schedule, please visit the ashram website at:

[www.arshavm.org](http://www.arshavm.org).

To subscribe or unsubscribe to the newsletter please send an email, with "subscribe" or "unsubscribe" in the subject line, to Janani at: [Janani\\_Chaitanya@yahoo.com](mailto:Janani_Chaitanya@yahoo.com)

**Sūktā Editors**

Kavita Megama, Kate Herse and Janani Chaitanya