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## AUPA eNEWSLETTER

### WHAT IS HIGH CASTE?

No doubt the ancient scriptures of India mention castes at a lot of places. The society too had (and has) these divisions. A study of Upanishads, however, makes the point clear that a man of high caste – called Brāhmana – really is someone who is of noble character. Birth, social background and other factors then recede to the background.

*Free of defects like selfish desire and attachment,  
Devoid of (impurities like) jealousy, greed and delusion,  
A person of such nature is a Brāhmana!*

*kāma-rāga-ādi-dosha-rahitah  
mātsarya-trishnā-moha-ādi-rahitah  
sa eva brāhmanah iti*

*Vajra-soochi Upanishad, mantra 9*

## Light on Self-inquiry



### WHO HAS DOUBTS?

Swāmi Lokeshānanda, a sannyāsi, asked Shri Bhagavān: Is there prārabdha for a jivanmukta?

Maharshi: Who is the questioner? From whom does the question proceed? Is it a jivanmukta who is asking?

Devotee: No, I am not a mukta as yet.

M: Then why not let the jivanmukta ask the question for himself?

D: The doubt is for me.

M: Quite so. The ajnāni has doubt but not a jnāni.

[This is a dialogue with profound implications. It shows how the doubter, the separate self, is *not really qualified* to take a stand either on the details of the created world or on the PureSelf. “Doubt the doubter,” said Maharshi elsewhere. This piece goes very well with Shankara’s commentary on Geetā 13.2 where the *purvapakshi* asks to whom ignorance belongs and the *siddhānti* replies that ignorance belongs verily to him who is experiencing it.  
– Editors]

## From the Editor's Desk



### SELF-TRAINING, A LIFELONG PROJECT

All of us are currently going through an unprecedented situation with Covid-19 having its sway over the entire globe! We have received a lot of guidance on how we may prevent the virus known as Corona from entering our system. Among the many tips that have come our way, one is not to touch our own face! (Someone joked we must not touch especially MEN – mouth, eyes and nose!) And we find that it is extremely difficult to stay alert about this. A friend of mine from Mumbai confessed before me over telephone that he ends up taking his hand to the face 20 times in an hour!

We thus find we are caught in a variety of habits and it is so hard for us to change! Many a time we do things without being conscious of them. And many other times we cannot help but do things though we are aware of what we are doing. Strong likes and dislikes are the cause in the latter case. Our hands and other organs (of action and perception) seem to have a certain amount of autonomy; they go ahead and behave the way they had done a hundred times before. Otherwise however they act as per the dictates of our mind, which, alas, has its own serious limitations. The poor thing carries its own burden of (mental, psychological) habits. With both the organs (*indriyas*) and the mind going berserk very many times, the soul in us (*kartā-bhoktā*, doer-enjoyer) is at the receiving end and it suffers.

On the high ground, it is not incorrect to say that awareness, moment-to-moment, is the golden key to bringing order to the behaviour of the organs and the mind. If we can constantly watch our own responses to all the stimuli from around us, with no bias or defence, things will fall into place. This business of awareness however is seen to be a hard nut to crack. We see and yet we do not; we know and yet we do not!

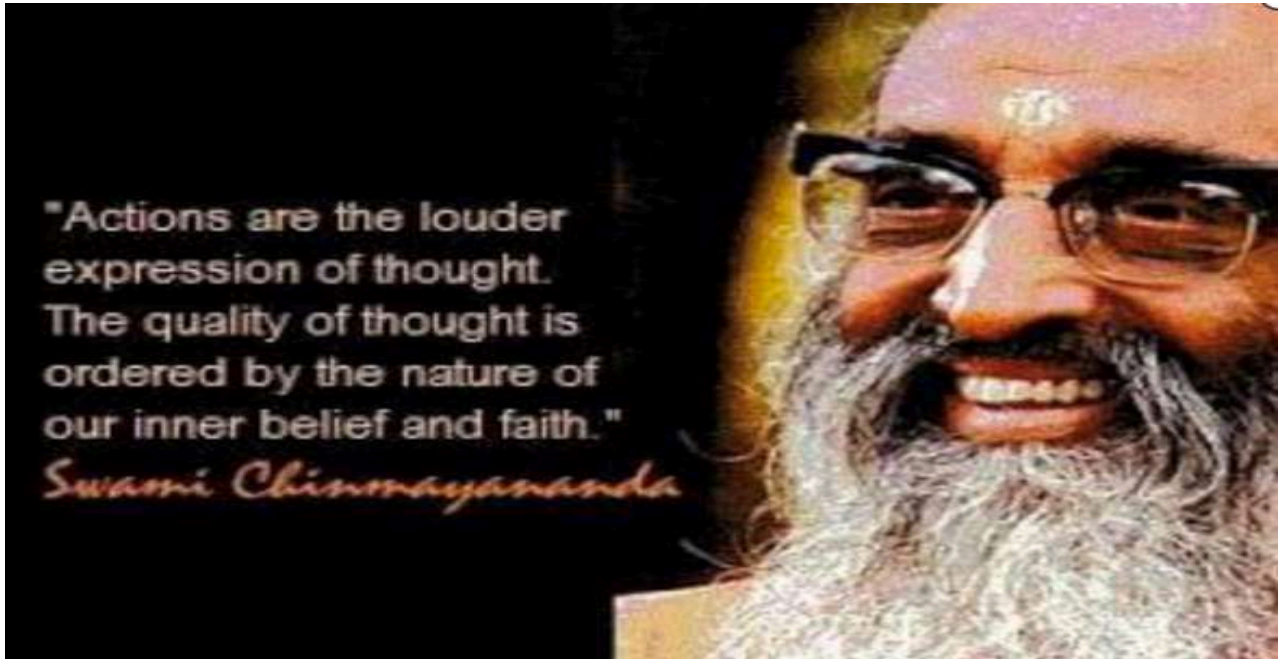
Therefore we make short term plans. We take little decisions and use our will power to improve our own behaviour day by day. We begin to believe that *small victories will lead to big victories*. Looked at in this way, our life seems to be a long journey of endless learning. We draw courage from sayings like – every saint has a past, every sinner a future. We train ourselves all through life.

Swāmi Chidānanda

*Thus Spake Chinmaya*



Actions follow Thoughts



{No wonder Pujya Swāmiji urges us to study the Vedānta and reflect on the elevating thoughts presented by the Upanishads (and the Geetā). When our thoughts rise to noble heights, we will have noble actions too in our life. - Editors}

# Word Of the month

## SHĀSTRA (Scripture)



The word *shāstra* (neuter noun) basically means an order, a command, a rule or a precept.

- 1) It means scriptural injunctions or sacred rules in certain contexts. Shri Krishna says to Arjuna, “As regards the determination of what is to be done and what is not to be done, *shāstra* (the scripture) is your authority. Know your duty, by referring to scriptural injunctions.” (16.24)
- 2) The definition is given in places like the dictionary by V S Apte, “*shishyate anena*,” meaning that by which one is instructed. The verbal root is *shās* (2P *shāsti*), to teach.
- 3) Scholars also give another definition, “*shāsanāt trāyate*,” meaning that which protects us by instructing us.
- 4) In the higher domain of *dharma* and *moksha*, the Vedas are the supreme source. The guidance<sup>1</sup> in ancient texts is such that we must primarily draw from the Vedas, and the second option (when we do not get a solution from the Vedas) is the *smritis* (*what is remembered*) and the ways of people who know the Vedas. Then comes the exemplary behaviour or conduct of pious people. The last, when all the previous sources somehow do not provide a satisfactory answer to a problematic situation, we must do what our conscience says.
- 5) Depending on the context, the word may signify any department of knowledge also. For example, *tarka-shāstra* means the science of logic, *alankāra-shāstra* means the body of knowledge related to decoration or ornamenting, in literature, poetry etc.

Notes:

1 *vedo'khilo dharma-moolam, smriti-sheelee cha tadvidām*

*āchāras-chaiva sādhoonam, ātmanas-tusthir-eva cha.* (Manu-smriti 2.6)



## Tips from the Upanishads

### LET US MAKE PEACE WITH NATURE

#### *Nature protects her protectors*

Upanishads, in their peace invocations, have the word shanti thrice – shāntih, shāntih, shāntih. One of them, known as ādhidaivika shānti, is for making peace with Nature.

The gods – Mitra, Varuna, Aryaman, Indra and Brihaspati etc. – represent, in fact, facets of Nature. They are the presiding deities of Nature's phenomena such as rains, sunshine, winds and the seasons.

*shan-no mitrah, sham varunah  
shanno bhavatu – aryamā  
shanna indro brihaspatih  
shanno vishnur-urukramah*

*May there be peace between the gods (aspects of Nature) and us!*

#### Taittiriya Upanishad, Peace invocation before Valli 1.



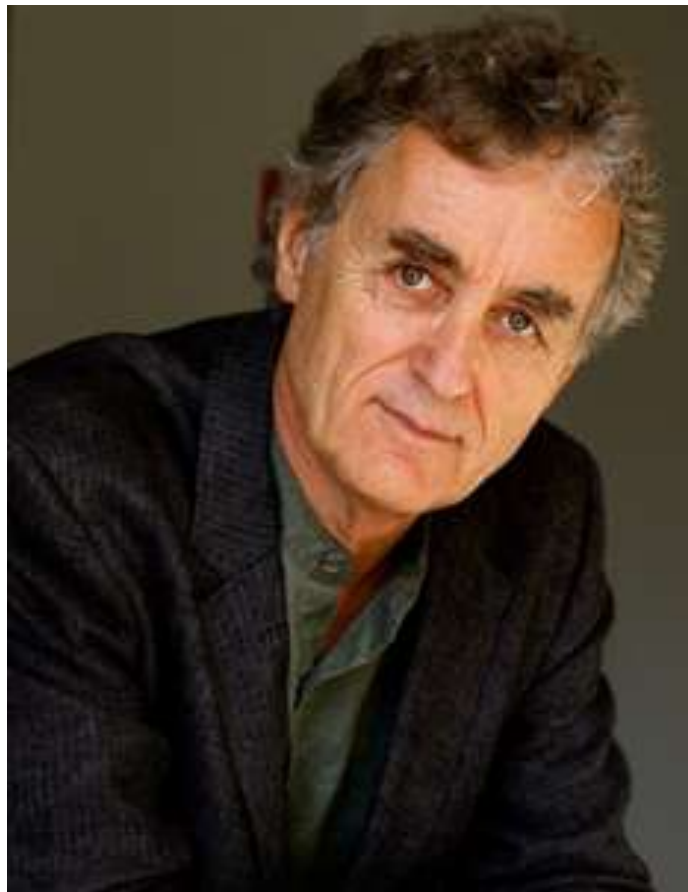
In the context of the Corona Virus threatening human life around the globe, we need to introspect and find out where we have erred. In line with these peace invocations, we need to mend fences with Nature in thought, word and deed.

## Quote of the Issue

### UNITY OF THINGS AND EVENTS

*The most important characteristic of the Eastern world-view is the awareness of the unity and mutual interrelation of all things and events, the experience of all phenomena in the world as manifestations of a basic oneness.*

Fritjof Capra



(in his book *The Tao of Physics*, page 141)

[**Fritjof Capra** (born 1939) is an Austrian-born American physicist, systems theorist and deep ecologist. In 1995, he became a founding director of the Center for Eco-literacy in Berkeley, California. He is on the faculty of Schumacher College. Capra is the author of several books, including *The Tao of Physics* (1975), *The Turning Point* (1982), *Uncommon Wisdom* (1988), *The Web of Life* (1996), *The Hidden Connections* (2002) and *The Systems View of Life* (2014).]

## Remembering Dr G

### UPANISHAD CONCLAVE IN MUMBAI, 2014



“This Upanishad project intends to reach out to the whole world, based on the spirit of the prayer, ‘May all be happy’ (*sarve bhavantu sukhinah*),” Dr G on December 9, 2014 in Mumbai.

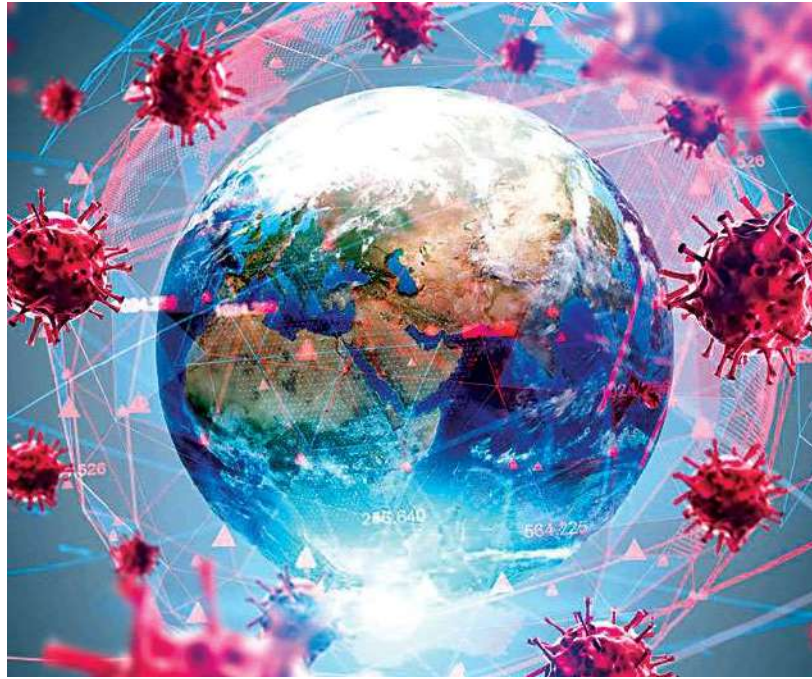
{Swāmi Chidānanda in the above picture has Dr Siddhārtha Gautam to his right and Shri Sudhir Seth, now a trustee of Fowai Forum, to his left. The venue was the Sheila Raheja Hall on Juhu Tara Road.}

**Smt. Indira Gautam  
writes from USA**



The Covid-19 scare has not spared anyone. Like in India and many other countries, we have a lockdown in USA too and, under the circumstances, it is not possible to hold the Happiness Yoga sessions. They are suspended till the situation becomes favorable.





I send my best wishes to all the readers of AUPA. Stay home and stay safe. May all of you be well.

**Harih Om.**

**Words from  
Guest writers**

**DEVELOPING WILLPOWER  
Swāmi Bodhamayānanda**



Concentrate, gather all your energies, and pour them in the right channels. You need very little to go ahead if you really *want* to go ahead.

Be strong and manly. Be ashamed of any smallness within you. It does not become you. The most important thing is your own resolve to succeed. Your inner potential is raring to go; open the mental and spiritual gates and it will flood the whole world. By lifting your thoughts up, your whole life can be elevated.

You have to have many small targets. Slowly you have to build up your willpower. Suppose you are a student; you study for one hour; you should then examine yourself about what you have studied. When you start succeeding in these small and realistic goals, you gain confidence and your willpower is strengthened.

Like Swami Vivekananda, there was another disciple of Sri Ramakrishna by name Swami Turiyananda. In his whole life he never sat with a bent backbone. Always upright! Imagine what a tremendous amount of willpower it takes to accomplish even such a small thing for the whole of life!

The Brooklyn Bridge that spans the river tying Manhattan Island to Brooklyn is truly a miracle bridge. In 1863, a creative engineer named John Roebling was inspired by an idea for this spectacular bridge.

However, bridge-building experts throughout the world told him to forget it; it could not be done.

Roebing convinced his son, Washington, who was a young up-coming engineer, that the bridge could be built. The two of them developed the concepts of how it could be accomplished and how the obstacles could be overcome. With unharnessed excitement and inspiration, they hired their crew and began to build their dream bridge.

The project was only a few months under construction when a tragic accident on the site took the life of John Roebing and severely injured his son, Washington. Washington was left with permanent brain damage and was unable to talk or walk. Everyone felt that the project would have to be scrapped since the Roebings were the only ones who knew how the bridge could be built.

Even though Washington was unable to move or talk, his mind was as sharp as ever. He still had a burning desire to complete the bridge. An idea hit him as he lay in his hospital bed, and he developed a code for communication. All he could move was one finger, so he touched the arm of his wife with that finger, tapping out the code to communicate to her what to tell the engineers who were building the bridge. For thirteen years, Washington tapped out his instructions with his finger until the spectacular Brooklyn Bridge was finally completed.

[**Swāmi Bodhamayānanda** works for the Ramakrishna Mission. He is the director of the Vivekananda Institute of Human Excellence, Hyderabad, and the Coordinator of the Personality Development Project of Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai.]

**Story  
time**



“Why should I fear?”

### **SURRENDER UNTO HIM**

There was a flight filled with people travelling from one destination to another. Suddenly the flight was caught in a storm and the flight started shaking uncontrollably. The pilot announced, "Fasten your seat belts and sit tight. We are going through turbulence. Please be careful, anything can happen." People started panicking, they started crying, they started praying... And there was this young man who saw from the corner of his eyes.... There was a little girl, who was as cool as a cucumber, with a smile on her face, as if nothing went wrong. After half an hour of turbulence, the storm finally dissipated. The flight was able to land peacefully. Everybody was relieved and were talking about what an amazing experience it was, filled with uncertainty.

The young man could not resist himself. He went to the girl and said, "Hey, I saw in the midst of the storm, while everybody was freaking out, you were sitting completely calm and peaceful. How is that?"

The small girl said, "Actually, my father is the pilot and I was very confident that he will take me home."

That confidence which the girl had in her father, is the kind of confidence we must have in our Supreme Father, when we are faced with the storms of calamity, disparity, difficulty and challenges in our life.

One of the signs<sup>1</sup> of a devotee who has surrendered is that he has full faith (*vishwāsa*) that the Lord will protect (*rakshishyati*) him.

Therefore let us have that confidence in the Lord's protection and lead life with great confidence.

Note: 1 The list of six goes as below:

The six aspects of full surrender to Krishna are (1) accepting things favourable for devotional service, (2) rejecting things unfavourable for devotional service, (3) believing firmly in the Lord's protection, (4) feeling exclusively dependent on the mercy of the Lord for one's maintenance, (5) having no interest separate from that of the Lord, and (6) always feeling meek and humble before the Lord. The Sanskrit verse goes as follows:

*ānukoolyasya sankalpah, prātikoolyasya varjanam  
rakshishyati-iti vishwāso, goptritve varanam tathā  
ātma-nikshepa-kārpanye, shad-vidhā sharanāgatih*

(*Hari Bhakti Vilāsa* 11.676)

[Transcribed on the basis of a narration in a video by Gauranga Das; Look for *gaurangadasofficial* in FaceBook.]

## News

After his return from Pune on March 2, to the hill town Solan in Himachal Pradesh, Swamiji did not move out. He has however been active on the social media, releasing videos, audios and text messages as relevant to the present, strained circumstances (Novel Covid-19 threat).

## Webinars

Swamiji presented two webinars in March 2020 on the following days.

Sunday, March 8 at 8.30 pm IST – on BEING AND BECOMING

Sunday, March 22 at 8.30 pm IST – on CAN DEVOTION ERASE THE EGO?

Both the above were based on Shri Ramana Maharshi's work SADDARSHANAM (verses 1 and 2 respectively).

He will present three webinars on dates as follows:

Monday, April 6, at 8.30 pm IST – Handling Anxiety and Insecurity,  
Guidance from Geetā

Sunday, April 19, at 8.30 pm IST – topic to be announced.

Sunday, May 3, at 8.30 pm IST – topic to be announced.

(Those who wish to join these webinars may please write to [fowaiforum@yahoo.com](mailto:fowaiforum@yahoo.com))

## Upcoming Events

### Mumbai

Three public talks that were planned for the middle of April in the city of Mumbai are now indefinitely postponed. For details, Email [info@aupa.in](mailto:info@aupa.in)

### Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh

A 4 day Retreat, with Bhagavad Geetā as the source of wisdom, was to be held at Misty Meadows, Kasauli, in the beautiful Himachal Pradesh. We are not sure if we can hold it now. Kindly check with us, using the Email [info@aupa.in](mailto:info@aupa.in) again. Details may also be seen at the website [fowai.org](http://fowai.org)

**MAHĀVIR JAYANTI**  
Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2020



We offer our pranams before Lord Mahāvīr (6<sup>th</sup> century BC), the apostle of peace, the champion of nonviolence, the most famous (24<sup>th</sup> and last) Tirthankara of the Jain tradition. May his life and teachings inspire us to ennoble our own life.

**HANUMĀN JAYANTI**  
Wednesday, April 8, 2020



We bow down before Lord Hanumān, the mighty servant of Lord Rāma. Eight benefits are said to come to us, when we pray to this God-form of purity, strength and wisdom:

Intelligence, strength, fame, courage, fearlessness, good health, absence of laziness and effective speech!



*buddhir-balam yasho dhairyam  
nirbhayatvam-arogatā  
ajādyam vāk-patutvam cha  
Hanumat-smaranāt bhavet!*  
JAI HANUMĀN!

VALLABHA-JAYANTI  
Saturday, April 18, 2020



Who has not enjoyed the sweet composition '*adharam madhuram ..*' (*madhurāstakam*)? Few however know it was composed by Shri Vallabhāchārya (1479 – 1531), a very eminent scholar who championed *shuddha-advaita* Vedānta, and provided the basis for the well-known *pusthi*-subtradition. He fashioned yet another powerful system of philosophy, centred in devotion to Shri Krishna.

We offer our *pranāms* to the great saint-philosopher, called Mahāprabhu in the circles of his admirers!

## AKSHAYA-TRITEEYĀ

Sunday, April 26, 2020

A very auspicious day, as per astrological calculations, that greets us every year is this Akshaya-Triteeyā. Good works done on this day have far more rewards than on other days! (*akshaya* literally means unending or infinite; it implies *far more than usual*.)



May we therefore not just buy gold or anything else on this day, which may be done of course, but also engage in some meritorious, religious acts and earn 'merit (punya)'.  
WISH YOU HAPPY AKSHAYA TRITEEYĀ!

## SHANKARA-JAYANTI

Tuesday, April 28, 2020



Ādi Shankarāchārya, considered a giant of a saint-philosopher, revived the Sanātana Dharma, with his elaborate commentaries on the *prasthāna-traya* (the Upanishads, the Geetā and the Brahmasutras). Someone rightly commented, "Shankara made a great, wide road in

and through the thick jungles of the Vedas. Āchāryas who came later took their grand chariots on that road!”

We bow down before the great master who gave a coherent structure to the famous *advaitavedānta* system of interpretation of the final teachings of the Vedas.

## SHRI RĀMĀNUJA-JAYANTI

April 28 also is the birthday, as per Indian astrology, of another spiritual giant – Shri Rāmānujāchārya – who preached and supported Vaishnavism and also travelled to several places to make kings and commoners aware of the Shri Vaishnava principles and messages. He offered teachings of the Vishishtādvaita Vedānta’s principles to everyone.

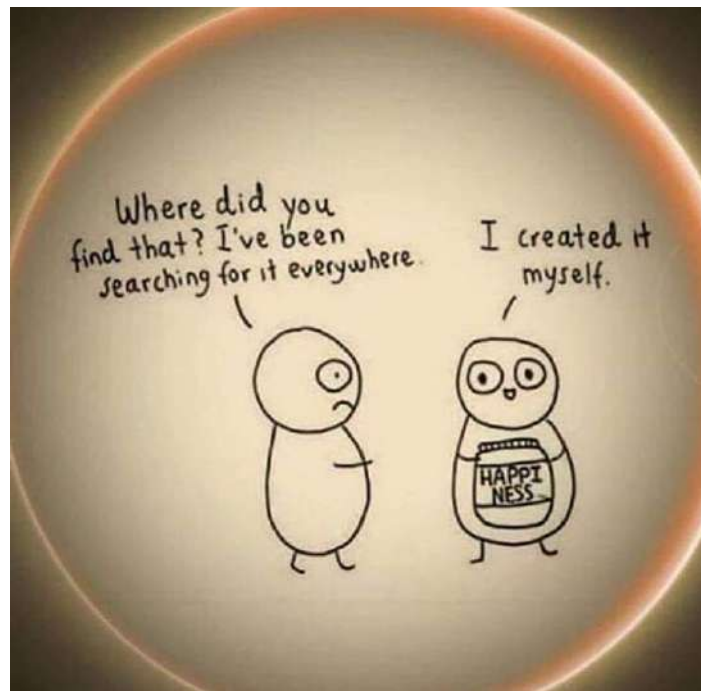


We bow down before Shri Rāmānujāchārya!



The birthday of Saint Surdās also falls on the same day this year. We offer our loving *pranāms* to the champion of devotion, who, though blind, lived a highly worthy life dedicated to Lord Krishna.

**TEAM AUPA**



(AUPA is the short form of AUPANISHADA-PURUSHA, the truth of the sacred source called Upanishads. This e-newsletter comes from Project Manager of the website: aupa.in – Upanishad Wisdom).

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