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Editor: Swami Chidananda
Associate Editor: Dolly Seth

AUPA eNEWSLETTER

MEDITATE, ALL THE TIME

Following right study (shravana) and reflection (*manana*), a seeker strives to stay in the higher understanding. Backing it all the time with more of required study and reflection, he engages in 'meditation'. "Till we hit the bed (in daily life) and till we breathe our last (in the entirety of life)," is a famous expression for the call from the Upanishads not to slip and lose our conquered ground.



(Translation below by S Radhakrishnan)

One should meditate on the unchanging, imperishable that is inside, manifesting (the diverse functions). The sage is continuously engaged in meditation till he goes to sleep or is overtaken by death.

(Original mantra)

*prakāshayantam-antahstham dhyāyet kootastham-avyayam
dhyāyann-āste munischaiva āsupter-āmrites-tu yah*
PAINGALA UPANISHAD, Chapter 3, Mantra 4

[This Upanishad, from Shukla Yajurveda, is a dialogue between the disciple Paingala and the teacher Yājñavalkya.]

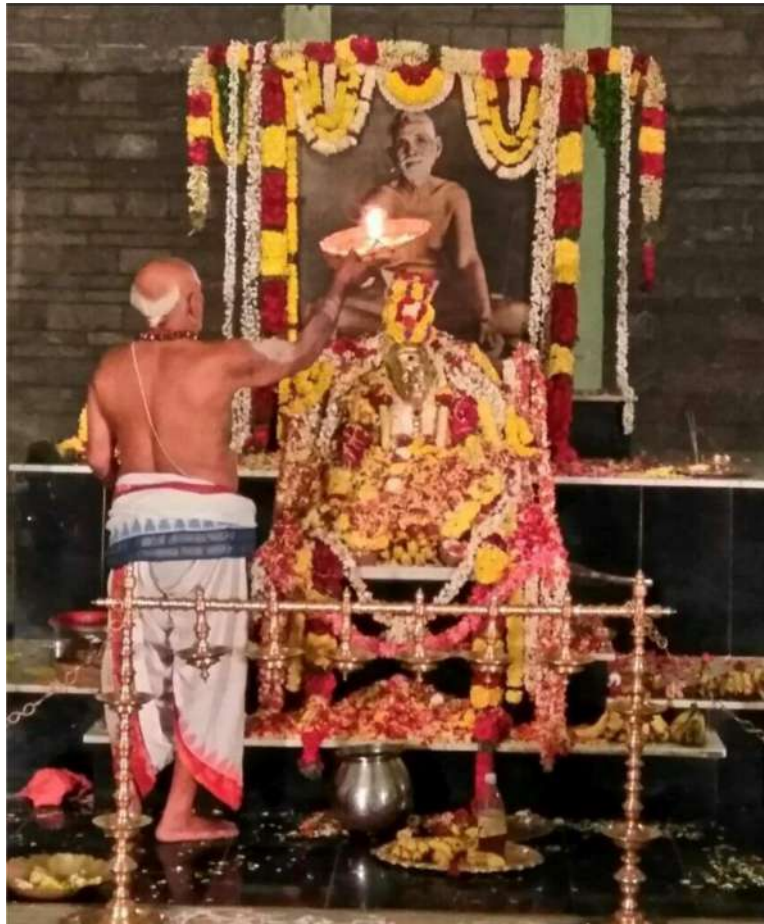
Light on Self-inquiry

IS THIS WORLD REAL OR UNREAL?

“It is a waste (of time) to get into the arguments about whether this (universe) is real, unreal, conscious, inert, sorrowful or happy. (Seek) the state of realization where there is no universe at all and which is marked by absence of egoism. Abiding by that state, devoid of dualities, is most desirable to all.

Shri Ramana Maharshi

(Source: Saddarshanam, verse 5, *satyam mrishā vā..*)



[Once more we see here an emphasis in the teachings of the Maharshi on ‘abidance in the Self’ after getting certain inputs from scriptural study. Vedānta study is not discouraged but we are cautioned not to get carried away by academic indulgence. Editors]



SPIRITUALITY AND HUMAN VALUES

A Close Relationship

Because of their residual tendencies (*vāsanās*), a large number of people fail to live a truly value-based life despite belonging to spiritual organizations. Aware of it or otherwise, their life has some hypocrisy. There is a mismatch between their ideals and their actuals. As a result, religions and spiritual traditions have often got a bad name. Many an atheist would say he is a better human being than people professing to be religious, spiritual or whatever!

Sincere self-application pays. We as seekers must realize that we have come to this world with a baggage. Though it is our good fortune to receive a lot of guidance from saintly figures, our habits make it very difficult to take full advantage of the precious directions. Some of our habits may have their roots in our previous lives.

No matter what, we need to strive to weaken our bad habits and eventually eliminate them. As a verse¹ in *Viveka-choodāmani* says, we are like a piece of sandalwood that, at present, is giving out foul smell! Certain contact with moisture has led to the growth of fungus all over the piece of sandalwood. By rubbing it against some sandpaper, this fungus layer will be gone and the innate, natural fragrance will fill the air around. Satsangs and sincere effort to follow the teachings of the Vedānta are the way to uncover the divinity in us.

The relation between spirituality and excellent human values is both ways: as we grow in spirituality, our conduct will be more and more value-based; when our behaviour is anchored in noble values, we rise higher in spirituality. No wonder Shri Krishna supplies 20 human values in *Geetā*² and calls them 'wisdom' itself! (He does not say they lead to wisdom.) In other words, it is difficult to distinguish between human excellence and spiritual elevation. Which among them is the means and which the end is difficult to decide. The dividing line between the means and the end becomes blurred.

Somebody once remarked, "A man does not become spiritual by merely going to temples." A friend of his quipped, "No man becomes spiritual by merely avoiding temples either!" We must see thus that the very many tools (exercises, practices) that religions provide cannot be blamed *per se*. When they are used properly, they bless us with inner unfoldment. When they are a mere show, they of course fail. Earnestness therefore is the backbone of true spiritual growth and eventual liberation.

Swāmi Chidānanda

1 ..*chandana-gandhavat sphutam*, **Viveka-choodāmani**, verse 274

2 ..*amānitvam-adambhitvam.. etad-jnānam-iti proktam*, **Geetā**, 13.7 thru 13.11

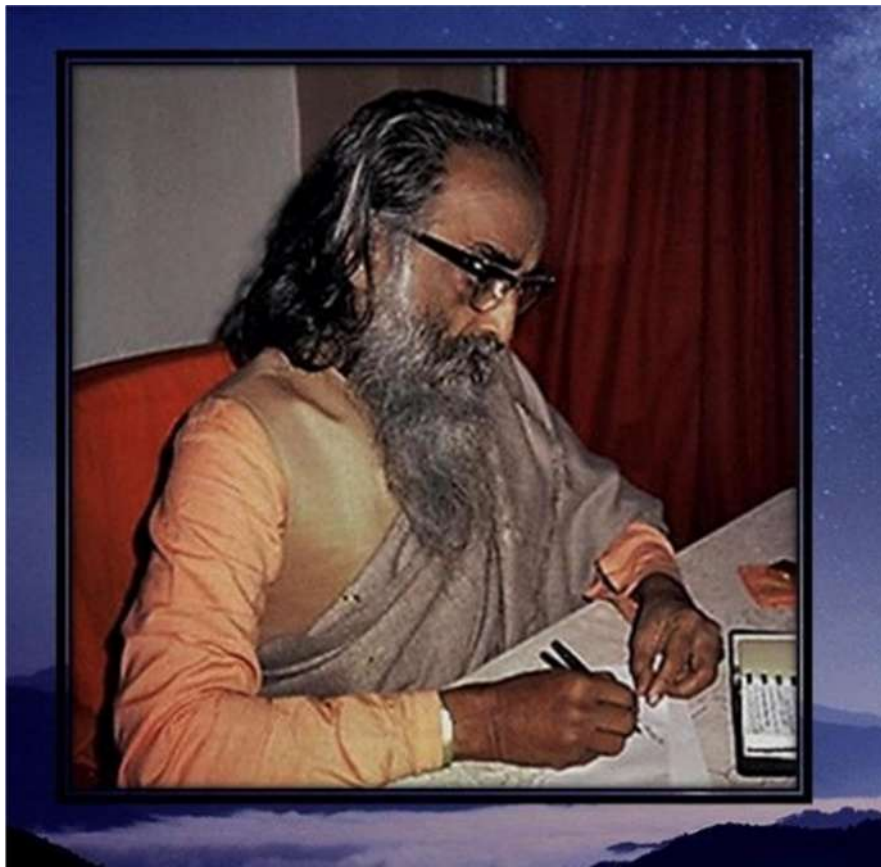
Thus Spake Chinmaya



GOD SPEAKS TO US, WRITES TO US

“Every sunrise is a message from God and every sunset His signature.”

Swami Chinmayananda ji



[The quote above is an example of how Swamiji represents vibrant Hinduism, without being swayed by either mere intellectualism or Buddhist-like influences that highlight erasure of ego and, in the process, deny God. - Editors.]

Word Of the month

YOGA (UNION)

The word 'yoga' is found in a lot of scriptures with many meanings attached to it. Many spiritual practices, in as much as they help a seeker "unite" or "re-unite" with God or with his own divine true nature, are called yoga. The piece of writing below presents a few meanings as found in the commentary (*bhāshya*) of Shri Shankarāchārya on the Bhagavad-Geetā.

1 'karma-yoga' is referred to as 'yoga' for example¹ in Geetā 5.1.

2 '*upāsana*' is the meaning of yoga when, for example in Geetā 8.23, the yogis are said to 'not return' from the higher regions where they go after their death. 'karma' (rituals) alone causes a soul to return, while 'karma + *upāsana*' qualifies the soul to stay long in the higher regions and attain² 'gradual liberation' from there.

3 Intense meditation is the meaning of yoga when, for example in Geetā 6.3, withdrawal from 'karma' is advised for someone who has mounted the steed of yoga. This withdrawal³ therefore makes 'yoga' here distinct from both karma and *upāsana*. It is such lofty *dhyāna* (or *nididhyāsana*) that leads to *samyag-darshana* (right seeing).

4 The Lord's capacity⁴ to bring forth or to show limitless glories, as in the verse 9.5 of Geetā (*pashya me yogam-aishwaram*).

Notes:

1 *sannyāsam karmanām Krishna punar-yogam cha shamsasi*.

2 Note the expression '*kālāntara-mukti-bhājām*' in the *bhāshya* on 8.23.

3 Note the expression '*uparamah kriyābhyah*' in the (quote in the) *bhāshya* on 6.3.

4 '*yukti*' and '*ghatana*' in the *bhāshya* on 9.5 of Geetā.

Tips from the Upanishads

LET YOUR HEART SPEAK

The wise exhort us to *use our heads* while judging ourselves, but *use our hearts* while judging others. It is a bad habit indeed to take pleasure in making negative comments on people or derive happiness in discussing the failures and shortcomings of others.

A line in the Taittiriya Upanishad asks us to follow the example of such administrators that are broadminded and kind-hearted.

Do as those pious people do - who are not harsh and who are desirous of earning more religious merit!

alookshā dharma-kāmāh syuh, yathā te tatra varteran

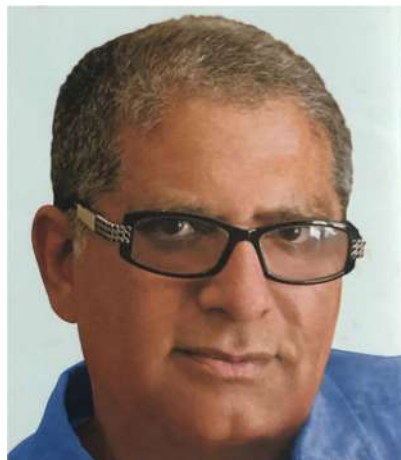
Taittiriya Upanishad, Valli 1, Anuvāka 22

We should indeed be cautious and take maximum care not to hurt the sentiments of others. We have to contribute to justice, fairness, efficiency and effectiveness at the same time. Striving towards these parameters of performance should go hand in hand with kindness and impartiality towards all fellow beings.

Quote of the Issue

DEALING WITH IMPULSES

Expanded Awareness is the Key to the Solution



“Know when to choose now and when to choose later. This isn’t something that fits any model. Some impulses lead to good outcomes, others lead to disappointment. At the level of pure awareness, impulses are aligned with future outcomes, which means that what you want to do at this very moment will turn out to be right for the future. With expanded awareness, you spontaneously have the right impulse, and if you don’t, you instinctively recognize that you need to pause and reconsider.”

Deepak Chopra, In his book ‘Spiritual Solutions’

[While a hasty reading of the literature on emotional intelligence makes us believe that we need to always control our impulses, Dr Chopra shows here that impulses are not always bad. In the above quote, he answers the question when to go by our impulse and when not to. Editors]

[Deepak Chopra (born 1946) studied medicine in India before emigrating in 1970 to the United States. He is an author and alternative-medicine advocate. A prominent figure in the New Age movement, his books and videos have made him one of the best-known and wealthiest figures in alternative medicine.]

Remembering Dr G

PAID WORK VERSUS VOLUNTEERING

The key to successful volunteering is to treat it just as you would a paying job. Show up on time; do what you're asked without complaining; be pleasant and kind. Don't volunteer as if you are doing an organization a favour by just showing up. Don't come just to socialize or be seen doing good works. Don't expect to come in as the head of the board or the president of the organization just because you were a supervisor or executive in your career.



Be prepared to work your way up doing menial tasks, just as you do in the business world. Good volunteers bring the same passion and the same intensity they had for their work to their altruistic efforts.

{From the book *Happiness is YOU* by Dr Siddhartha B Gautam, page 70}

**Smt. Indira Gautam
writes from USA**



THE WHOLE WORLD IS GOING THROUGH HARD TIMES

Readers of AUPA, dear friends,

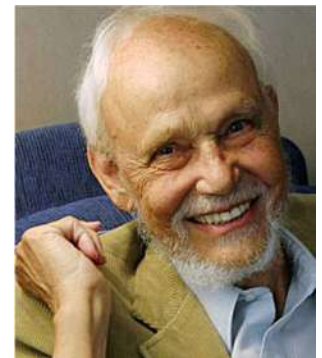
In the West or in the East, or Down Under, the whole world seems to be facing, at this time, some of humanity's hardest challenges ever. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused a lot of stress to us in several ways – disease, death, economic disaster etc. New forms of political polarization are making grave confrontations possible in the near future. Instead of coming together as one large family (*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*), we seem to be getting divided in newer ways.

Amidst all these problems in the external world, we also recognize the disorder in our own consciousness, within our own psyche. We are unable to balance work and life, head and heart, material pursuits and the spiritual quest. Even as gadgets claim to help us do more in less time, we find 24 hours are not at all enough for us to catch up with all the tasks before us, to fulfil all our desires and aspirations.

The need of the hour seems to be honest introspection and being true to our inmost callings. If self-deception can be brought to an end, it can be the forerunner of societal change. If more and more among us truly listen to our own inner voice, we can surely get out of the mess that we have created.

May the study of Vedānta lead us to such an enhanced self-awareness, which in turn will help us reorganize our life. May we come together to live in peace and joy. **Harih Om!**

**Words from
Guest writers**



ON SIKHISM

Huston Smith

{In this month when we are celebrating Guru Nanak Jayanti, it will be nice to see how a reputed Western professor of "religions of the world" summarized Sikhism. - Editors}

Hindus are inclined to regard Sikhs (literally disciples) as somewhat wayward members of their own extended family, but Sikhs reject this reading. They see their faith as having issued from an original

divine revelation that inaugurated a new religion.

The revelation was imparted to Guru Nanak, guru being popularly explained as a dispeller of ignorance or darkness (gu) and bringer of enlightenment (ru). Nanak, pious and reflective from his birth in 1469, around the year 1500 mysteriously disappeared while bathing in a river. On reappearing three days later he said: "Since there is neither Hindu nor Muslim, whose path shall I follow? I will follow God's path. God is neither Hindu nor Muslim, and the path I follow is God's." His authority for those assertions, he went on to explain, derived from the fact that in his three-day absence he had been taken to God's court, where he was given a cup of nectar (amrit, from which Amritsar, Sikhism's holy city, is named) and was told:

This is the cup of the adoration of God's name. Drink it. I am with you. I bless you and raise you up. Whoever remembers you will enjoy my favour. Go, rejoice in my name and teach others to do so also. Let this be your calling.

That Nanak began by distinguishing his path from both Hinduism and Islam underscores the fact that Sikhism arose in a Hindu culture – Nanak was born into the kshatriya caste – that was under Muslim domination. Sikhism's homeland is Punjab, "the land of the five rivers" in northwest India, where Muslim invaders were in firm control. Nanak valued his Hindu heritage while also recognizing the nobility of Islam. Here were two religions, each in itself inspired, but which in collision were exciting hatred and slaughter.

If the two sides had agreed to negotiate their differences, they could hardly have reached a more reasonable theological compromise than the tenets of Sikhism afford. In keeping with Hinduism's *sanatana dharma* (Eternal Truth), the revelation that was imparted to Nanak affirms the ultimacy of a supreme and formless God who is beyond human conceiving. In keeping with the Islamic revelation, however, it rejects the notion of *avatars* (divine incarnations), caste distinctions, images as aids to worship, and the sanctity of the Vedas. Having departed from Hinduism in these respects, however, the Sikh revelation leans back toward it in endorsing, as against Islam, the doctrine of reincarnation.

This relatively even division between Hindu and Muslim doctrines has led outsiders to suspect that in his deep, intuitive mind, if not consciously, Nanak worked out a faith he hoped might resolve the conflict religion had produced in his region. As for the Sikhs themselves, they acknowledge the conciliatory nature of their faith, but ascribe its origins to God. Only in a secondary sense was Guru Nanak a *guru*. The only True *Guru* is God. Others qualify as *gurus* in proportion as God speaks through them.

The official Sikh *gurus* are ten in number and, beginning with Guru Nanak, the Sikh community took shape through their ministrations. The tenth in this lineage, Guru Gobind Singh, announced that he was the last of this line; following his death the Sacred Text that had taken shape would replace human *gurus* as the head of the Sikh community. Known as the Guru Granth Sahib, or Collection of Sacred Wisdom, this scripture has ever since been revered by the Sikhs as their living *Guru*; it lives in the sense that the will and words of God are alive within it. For the most part it consists of poems and hymns that came to six of the *Gurus* as they meditated on God in the deep stillness of their hearts and emerged to sing joyfully God's praises.

Sikhism has been under heavy assault during much of its history. At a time when the faith was particularly hard pressed, the Tenth *Guru* called for those who were prepared to commit their lives unreservedly to the faith to step forward. To the "beloved five" who responded, he gave a special initiation, thereby instituting the Khalsa, or Pure Order, which continues to this day. Open to men and women alike who are willing to fulfil its regulations, it requires that those who enter it abstain from alcohol, meat and tobacco, and that they wear "the five Ks," so-called because in Punjabi all begin with the letter "k." The five are uncut hair, a comb, a sword or dagger, a steel bracelet, and

undershorts. Originally all five of these had protective as well as symbolic sides. Together with the comb, uncut hair (typically gathered in a turban) shielded the skull while tying in with the yogic belief that uncut hair conserves vitality and draws it upward; the comb for its part symbolized cleanliness and good order. The steel bracelet provided a small shield, while at the same time “shackling” its wearer to God as a reminder that hands should always be in God’s service. Undershorts, which replaced the Indian *dhoti*, meant that one was always dressed for action. The dagger, now largely symbolic, was originally needed for self-defense.

At the same time that he instituted the *Khalsa*, Guru Gobind Singh extended his name Singh (literally lion, and by extension stalwart and lionhearted) to all Sikh men, and to women he gave the name Kaur, or princess. The names remain in force for Sikhs, right down to today.

These matters concern religious forms. Centrally, Sikhs seek salvation through union with God by realizing, through love, the Person of God, who dwells in the depths of their own being. Union with God is the ultimate goal. Apart from God, life has no meaning; it is separation from God that causes human suffering. In the words of Nanak, “What terrible separation it is to be separated from God and what blissful union to be united with God!”

World renunciation does not figure in this faith. The Sikhs have no tradition of renunciation, asceticism, celibacy, or mendicancy. They are householders who support their families with their earnings and donate one-tenth of their income to charity.

Today there are some 13 million Sikhs in the world, most of them in India. Their headquarters are in the famed Golden Temple, which is located in Amritsar.

[**Huston Smith** (1919 – 2016) was a leading scholar of religious studies in the United States. He was widely regarded as one of the world's most influential figures in religious studies. He authored at least thirteen books on world's religions and philosophy, and his book *The World's Religions* sold over three million copies as of 2017 and remains a popular introduction to comparative religion. He was a professor at Washington University in St. Louis, M I T and Syracuse University. While at St. Louis, he had a lot of exchanges with Swami Satprakashananda of the Vedanta Society, and he experimented with meditation, yoga etc. He spent the last 3 decades of his life at Berkeley, California.]

Story time

GARUDA AND THE LITTLE BIRD

Who can Understand the Master Plan of God?

Once in Vaikuntha, Garuda was just at the gate when Lord Yama came to visit Bhagavān Vishnu. As Garuda was watching, Lord Yama looked at a tiny little bird on the branch of a tree, took a step forward and turned back to give it a second glance too!



Garuda, who was watching all this, felt sorry for the little bird. Now that Lord Yama's eyes had fallen on that bird, it was certainly in danger. With an intention of saving the life of that little one, Garuda took

the bird far, far away, deep into a forest and placed it on a branch of a dense tree. Satisfied and with a prayer for the bird, Garuda flew back to Vaikuntha.

Soon Lord Yama, who had finished his work with Bhagavān, was on his way out. Garuda, unable to contain his curiosity, stopped Lord Yama and asked him why he gave a second glance to the bird as he entered the gates of Vaikuntha. To Garuda's dismay, Lord Yama replied, "Dear Garuda, the bird was to meet its end on a branch of a dense tree, deep in a forest very far away from here. I was wondering how it would get there in such a short time. Hence the second glance".

We are all indeed just *nimittas* in the grand plan of Ishwara. It is our intentions alone that matter, since the result of the action is already fixed in that master plan! Let us *do our best and leave the rest*, as Gurudev Swāmi Chinmayānanda would put it!

[narrated by Shalini Keshavan]

News

October 29, 2020: The sixth Satsang in memory of Smt Ratna Bhatia in Los Angeles was held on Thursday, the 29th October (evening of Wednesday, October 28 in USA), online over Zoom. The topic was "Perspectives from Geeta on Value-based Management". Aspects like leadership, communication, social responsibility and spirituality in the Corporate World were taken up.

Talks on Radio: The FM station 'jnāna-dhwani' (FM 90.8) has been airing Swāmiji's talks every Monday at 7 am in Mysuru.

Geetā and Upanishad talks on YouTube: These have been going on, receiving excellent response from audiences in India and in the USA. As the Daylight-Saving Time ended in Europe and America, the timings in India have changed. Anyone can now join by reaching over to FOWAI channel at 8 am (IST) for Geetā on Wednesdays and at 9.30 pm (IST) for Mundaka Upanishad on Fridays.

Kannada talks every Wednesday: Swamiji has been delivering 30 minutes talks on Geeta to an audience consisting mainly of teachers at the Suvarnamukhi Samskriti Dhama in Bengaluru.

Wednesday, November 4: Swamiji delivered a talk on INSTAGRAM to a large number of people associated with Iyengar Centre for Fine Arts (ICFA), Bengaluru. The topic was: Bhagavad Geeta for the Modern Youth. This was done under a series called "Web Trio" where the one-hour session was split into three parts: *Insights into Psychology*, *Healthy Relationships* and *Being Effective at Work and in Life*.

Webinars

WEBINARS HELD

Two webinars were held on October 11 and October 25 by Swamiji.

Webinar 184: What blocks Self-knowledge?

Webinar 185: Reflections on God.

WEBINARS COMING UP

Swamiji will present webinars on November 8 and November 22.

DHIMAHI Events

Deriving Holistic insights into Management from
the Heritage of India



Monday, October 26: Swamiji inaugurated Wisedemy's new YouTube channel, where a team led by Cdr. Guruprasad (IN, Retd) has begun posting educative videos. These productions are especially geared to help the youth face their challenges on a firm footing, empowered by right values. The videos draw from classic works like Geeta, Mahabharata, Panchatantra, Valmiki Ramayana and Arthashastra on one hand, and, on the other, draw inspiration from present time heroes like APJ Abdul Kalam, M S Dhoni and Narendra Modi.



A scene of the 2004 Mount Everest Expedition (Webinar 183)

It's team work



Cdr Lijo showed the team, including him, that made it to the peak of Mt Everest (webinar 183 on Oct 4, 2020)



Swamiji presenting Webinar 184, "What Blocks Self-knowledge?", Oct 11, 2020



Web TRIO Series 26

Bhagavath Geeta for the MODERN YOUTH

November 4th Wednesday...

Mr Seshadri Iyengar, Director of ICFA and himself an accomplished dancer, announcing Swamiji's talk at the Iyengar Centre for Fine Arts, Bengaluru.

Upcoming Events

Swāmiji will speak to a large audience, spread across the world, on OrthoTV, a channel especially meant for the World Association of Orthopaedics. Two webinars will be offered on Saturdays December 5 and 19.

YouTube Classes: These will continue as per the schedule mentioned above.

THE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS IS HERE AGAIN!

Saturday, November 14

Diwāli (*Dīpāwali*): Who does not know Diwāli? Yet let us go over the basics. It is our 'festival of lights', usually lasting five days and celebrated during the Lunisolar month Kārtika (between mid-October and mid-November). One of the most popular festivals of Hinduism, Diwāli symbolizes the spiritual "victory of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance".



The festival is widely associated with Lakshmi, goddess of prosperity, with many other regional traditions connecting the holiday to Sitā and Rāma, Vishnu, Krishna, Yama, Yami, Durgā, Kāli, Dhanvantari or Vishvakarman. Furthermore, it is, in some regions, a celebration of the day Lord Rāma returned to his kingdom Ayodhyā after defeating the demon-king Rāvana.

In the lead-up to Diwāli, celebrants prepare by cleaning, renovating, and decorating their homes and workplaces with *diyās* (lamps) and rangoli. During the Diwali people wear their finest clothes, offer *pujā* (worship) to Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity and wealth, light fireworks, and partake in family feasts, where *mithāi* (sweets) and gifts are shared. Diwāli is also a major cultural event for the Hindu and Jain diaspora from the Indian subcontinent.

The first day of the festival is marked by cleaning homes and making decorations on the floor. The second day is Naraka Chaturdashi (the day on which Shri Krishna killed the demon Naraka), important in the South. Western, central, eastern and northern Indian communities observe main day of Diwali on the third day, the day of Lakshmi Pujā and the darkest night of the traditional month. In some parts of India, the day after Lakshmi Pujā is marked with the *Govardhan Pujā*. Hindu and Sikh craftsmen communities mark this day as *Vishwakarma Pujā* and observe it by performing maintenance in their work spaces and offering prayers.

Some other faiths in India also celebrate their respective festivals alongside Diwali. The Jains, for example, observe their own Diwāli which marks the final liberation of Shri Mahāvira. The main day of the festival of Diwāli (the day of Lakshmi Pujā) is an official holiday in Fiji, Guyana, Malaysia (except Sarawak), Mauritius, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

MAY JOY AND WISDOM INCREASE IN YOUR LIFE!
HAPPY DIWĀLI!
TEAM AUPA

BHĀI DOOJ
Monday, November 16, 2020

Bhāi Dooj, (also called Bhāubeej, Bhāi Tika, Bhāi Phonta) is a festival celebrated on the second lunar day of Shukla Paksha (bright fortnight) in the Vikram Samvat or of Shālivahan Shaka calendar month of Kārtika.

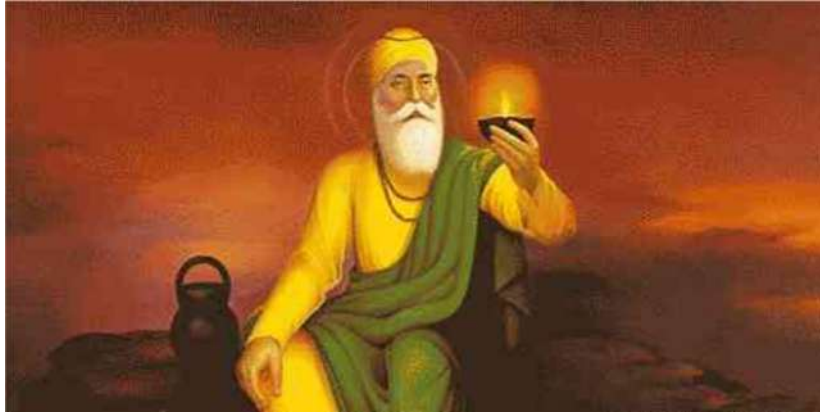


The celebrations of this day are similar to the festival of Rakshā Bandhan. On this day, sisters give gifts to their brothers and younger sister also gives gifts to their elder brothers.

TEAM AUPA greets all on this occasion of the popular festival.

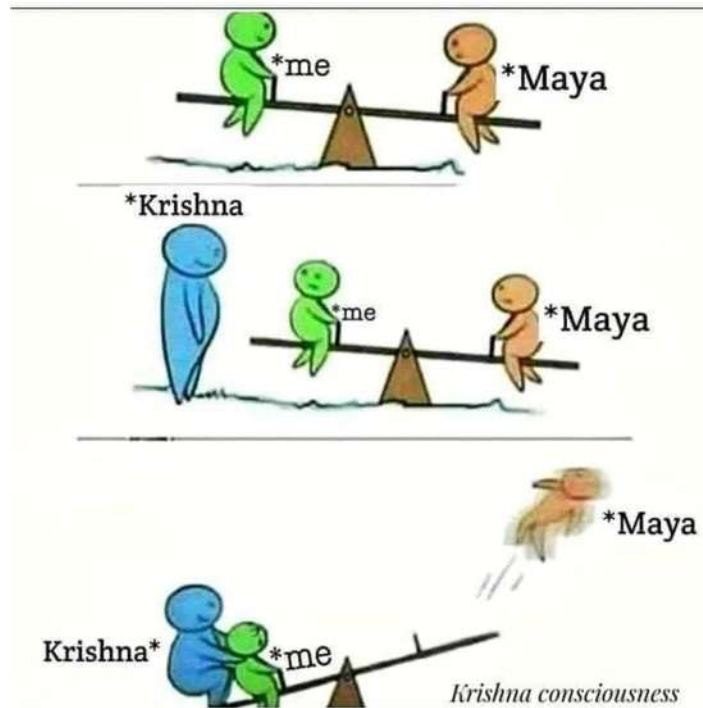
GURU NANAK DEV JAYANTI
Monday, November 30, 2020

The birthday of Guru Nanak Dev is observed on Kartik Purnima. He was born in the year 1469 in Talwandi, now known as Nankana Sahib, which belongs to Pakistan today. He was a mystic, philosopher, yogi, householder, religious reformer, social reformer and a well-wisher of all.



We bow down before the great master whose great purity, profound wisdom and radiant, divine life continue to inspire humanity.

BEST WISHES FROM TEAM AUPA FOR GURU NANAK JAYANTI



(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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Email: info@aupa.in Contact: +91 9967 878798