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AUPA eNEWSLETTER

TRANSCEND, NOT END

One of the frequently asked questions with regard to “action and its results” (*karma* and its *phala*) is, “What caused our first birth?” If our present birth (and the life following the birth) is because of our own past actions, and our future births will be the result of other actions on our part, there is a ‘beginningless and endless’ cycle of births and deaths, caused by the inexhaustible collection of ‘*karmas*’ in our (the *jeeva-ātmā*’s) account. Where is the way out?

The Vedānta, as though with a mischievous smile, admits, “There cannot be an end to the cycle of *karmas* but you may ‘transcend’ this whole frame of reference!”

All our karmas vanish when THAT supreme truth is beheld.

ksheeyante chāsya karmāni, tasmin drishte parāvare

Mundaka Upanishad 2.2.8

(Mundaka 2, Khanda 2, Mantra 8)

To behold the truth implies ‘*jñāna*’ and not any amount of *karma*. ‘*Karma*’ can never liberate us. In other words, the sphere of cause and effect is indeed one of no beginning and no end; the liberating wisdom helps us transcend this sphere, where we discover our true nature, which *was-is-and-will* be ever free.

Light on Self-inquiry

EARNEST EFFORT



You are always the Self. Earnest efforts never fail. Success is bound to result.

Sri Ramana Maharshi

{ 251, Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi }

[The matter of Self-knowledge can be so baffling that we sometimes may get frustrated. The grip of our past karmas seems to be too strong to have any hope of getting freed. Words like the above bring new hope to us. – Editors]



MEDITATION

The Return to the Root of your Being

The truth of the Pure Self is indeed hard to express in words. The awakening is not like any other process, for it is not a phenomenon on the axis of time. Nor is it a journey in the realm of space. Nor does causation have anything to do with it. Enlightened souls therefore have always wondered¹, “How do we instruct with regard to this?”

A number of expressions, examples or analogies are however helpful. The transition from the field of ignorance (*avidyā-bhoomi*) to that of wisdom (*vidyā-bhoomi*) is described as the return to our own Source. The ultimate truth is indeed ‘*the purusha from whom everything proceeds*’ as Lord Shri Krishna exclaims².

How can the space within a pot find space as such? Does it have to go anywhere? Does it have to change in any manner? Does it need some agent of change to cause a mutation in it so that it becomes space in general? Is not the pot space already space itself? Likewise, the Vedānta says, every one of us is already the Self and there is no travel, through space or time, involved in the matter of enlightenment.

The self-evident truth, which is resplendently shining all the time, becomes known as though in the moments of deep contemplation upon the revelations of the Upanishads. Sage Yājñavalkya therefore declares³, “We must know the Self. We must listen, reflect and meditate.”

Maharshi Ramana often used the expression⁴, “Find the Source of the I-thought.” Michael Singer⁵, whose book ‘The Untethered Soul’ is highly acclaimed, writes, “In the highest state, the focus of consciousness is turned back to the Self. When you contemplate the nature of the Self, you are meditating. That is why meditation is the highest state. It is the return to the root of your being, the simple awareness of being aware. Once you become conscious of the consciousness itself, you attain a totally different state. You are now aware of who you are. You have become an awakened being.”

Our effort therefore has to be towards the mature engagement in the subject of Self-knowledge. Call it scriptural study or self-inquiry or something else, we are not pursuing anything in the realm of time, which means in the domain of things that come and go. We are not interested in *becoming*, but are exploring the nature of *being*.

Swāmi Chidānanda

Notes:

1 *na vidmah.. yathā etad anushishyād* – Kena Upanishad 1.3

2 *yatah pravrittih prasritā purānee* – Geeta 15.4

3 *ātmā vā are drastavyah, shrotavyah, mantavyah, nididhyāsitavyah*. Brihadāranyaka Up. 2.4.5

4 *aham-ayam kuto bhavati chinватаh*, for example, in Upadesha Sāra, verse 19

5 *The Untethered Soul*, Chapter 4, page 37 of 184.

Thus Spake Chinmaya



IMPORTANCE OF SWADHARMA



To work in a field that is ordered by one's own vāsanās is better because, in that case, there is a chance of exhausting the existing vāsanās. When the individual strives in a field contrary to the existing vāsanās, she / he not only fails to exhaust them but also creates a new load of vāsanās in her / his temperament.

Swāmi Chinmayānanda

(In his book – *Vedanta the Science of Life* – Part 1, Understanding Human Nature.)

(Vāsanās are the hidden tendencies within every one of us, which prompt us to be extrovert and look for happiness in the outer world. They bind us to the realm of limitations, to the sphere of the ego.)

PRASĀDA

(Cheerfulness, Gift from the Divine)

Two meanings are attached to the word '*prasāda*', broadly speaking - serenity of mind and blessings that we receive from God.

"One attains the serene state of mind when one goes about life's situations without personal likes and dislikes," says¹ Shri Krishna and adds², "In this state, all sorrow comes to an end." A synonym of '*prasannatā*', the word '*prasāda*' here implies an alert state of mind, devoid of complaints or regrets. We the seekers become peaceful and happy when our mind lets go of its desires and worries. *Prasāda* thus is the sign of high *chitta-shuddhi*, mental purification.

In a related manner, God too is described as 'being pleased' with us when we serve Him through work or worship. He becomes *prasanna*. (*prasanna* is the adjective while *prasāda* is the noun; *praseedati* is the verb that means (someone) is pleased.)

In *karmayoga*, we take any result – favourable or otherwise – as God's *prasāda*, His gift. This acceptance of whatever comes to us following some action is itself *phala-tyāga*, renouncing the result of action. Victory or defeat, it is *Ishwara-prasāda*. When we go to a temple and some ritual of worship is conducted, we get something at the end – a flower, a fruit, a sweet etc. We call it *prasāda*. On one hand, it is a gift from God and, on the other, it signifies His grace and blessings. We do not see the external value of the *prasāda*. If another devotee got a delicious sweet and we got just a tiny flower, it is not an issue at all. For either way it is divine grace that has come to us through any kind of *prasāda*.

Lasting peace also is possible, through divine grace only. "Take refuge in Him alone in all possible ways," advises Shri Krishna, "you will have supreme peace by His grace only."³ The word *prasāda* is used to signify 'grace' in this context.

Notes:

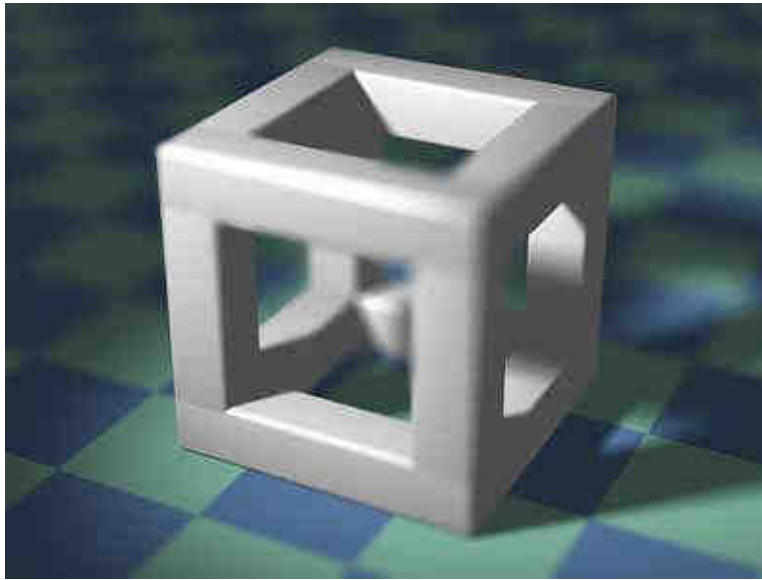
1 *rāga-dvesha-viyuktas-tu ..prasādam-adhigacchatī*, Geetā 2.64

2 *prasāde sarva-dukkhānām hanir-asya upajāyate*, Geetā 2.65

3 *tat-prasadāt parām shāntim...* prāpsyasi, Geetā 18.62

Tips from the Upanishads

Tips from Upanishads
HAVE AN EYE FOR DEEPER DIMENSIONS
Do not conclude without examining more



Appearances are deceptive and we know it. Yet a lot of our energy goes towards external glory. Cosmetics, for example, are said to be a huge industry. We the humanity are head over heels to look better; eager to have our visiting (business) cards create an impressive image, happy to be close to people in power (and bask in reflected glory) and so on. Two mantras in the Katha Upanishad aim at awakening us to our own deeper dimensions. Far more important than how we look, what our position in the society is or how much bank balance we have, is the nobility of our thoughts and the beauty of our emotions.

Objects are greater than the senses that perceive them; the mind, which is the seat of thoughts and emotions, is even greater.

indriyebhyah parā hi arthāḥ; arthebhyascha param manah

Kathopanishad 1.3.10 (Chapter 1, Valli 3, mantra 10)

[The objects are called superior to the senses in the mantra in a technical sense. The senses were created in order to perceive their objects, therefore, in a sense, they are inferior.] What is important here is to take note of the fact that thoughts and emotions (implied by manah, the mind) are far more important than the physical looks of people. Black or white, European or Asian, people with healthy thoughts and caring emotions are greater assets than those who impress us with their physical stature and financial strength.

We will do well always to be careful in judging others, taking time to see them in a holistic frame of reference.

Quote of the Issue

LIVING IN THE PRESENT



When the mind is alert and stays totally in the present moment, getting dragged neither by thoughts of the past nor by visions of the future, 'thoughtless awareness' develops. Staying in it is the key to liberation or enlightenment. In that state, all the junk information stuffed in the mind gets emptied out and free space is created for deep intuitive understanding of Universal Truths coming from the inner Self.

[Shri Narasimha Prabhu, based in Bengaluru, met many scholars and enlightened masters during his spiritual quest. He practiced yoga and meditation for several years and has deep interest in Indian philosophy. He is the founder of the Light of the Self Foundation and holds regular classes on Self-knowledge and Self-realization. With an M Tech from IIT Bombay, he had served in senior positions in Telecom R&D.]

Remembering Dr G

GOLF AND HAPPINESS



Happiness is not a team sport. I want to emphasize that *happiness is you*. It is not to be found in something or someone external to you. If you think of happiness as a sport, it is more like golf – an individual pursuit that can be more enjoyable in the company of others. You can use your solo game to work on the problems you know you have, but when you play with others, they may be aware of something you are not aware of – a problem in your stance, for example – and may be able to offer you tips to improve. And you can do the same for them. It is only practical that if we involve those closest to us in our happiness journey, their support will lift us up and increase their own happiness as well.

[The above is an extract from the book **HAPPINESS IS YOU** by Dr Siddhartha B. Gautam, page 52.]

Smt. Indira Gautam
writes from USA

LET US NOT FORGET THE LESSONS

..from North Carolina

My dear friends, readers of AUPA,

By and large, there is less fear and anxiety all over the world, especially in India, about Covid-19. It is in fact a matter of pride that India is supplying vaccines against the dreaded disease to many countries globally. Though the scenario in the United States, where I live, is not yet all that good, we are much more hopeful than before in view of the vaccination campaign everywhere in this prosperous nation.

None of us should forget the lessons that Corona taught us. In essence, our lifestyle should change

and our relationship with Nature has to get better. We must live more in harmony with Nature, avoid wasting natural resources, keep away chemicals as far as possible and learn to embrace plurality or diversity.

To exploit others and to let other exploit us are both dangerous and harmful to everyone on either side in the long run. Can we live more responsibly, without scheming to dominate over people or throwing our weight around wherever possible?



Vedānta teaches us how we may get in touch with the fountainhead of virtue. Self-knowledge is the source from which streams of good thoughts, words and deeds arise. Relentless self-awareness, leading to living in the present without egoism, is the abundant source, the wellspring, of inspired ways by which we can lend a healing touch to people around us. And of course heal our own wounded psyche.

May the coming months fill every one of you with true spiritual insights, which enrich your life and make you a source of joy to all around you.

Harih Om!

**Words from
Guest writers**

ORDINARY ASPIRANTS CAN REACH THE GOAL

Swāmi Shāntātmānanda

The devotees would often approach Sri Rāmakrishna to get their doubts about spiritual life clarified. They would ask him about various types of aspirants, the role of a guru or a spiritual teacher in the life of a *sādhaka*, etc. In particular, they would express their amazement at the spiritual strength or power of some of the spiritual aspirants who live in close proximity to their gurus. Sri Rāmakrishna would patiently answer them. He would often refer to two types of spiritual aspirants, namely the *jīva-kotī* and

the *ishwara-koti*. He would say that the *jiva-kotis* are normal spiritual aspirants, who have to struggle hard to get some spiritual enlightenment. They need the grace or guidance of a guru, and he would compare them to the outer pillars of a huge prayer hall.

The *ishwara-kotis* are those spiritual aspirants who are born with exceptional *samaskāras* or spiritual tendencies. They are virtually born free and remain practically untouched by the vagaries of earthly life. They come down on earth as the companions of the Lord or *avatāra*, and take part in his divine sport or play. They are like the inner pillars of a huge prayer hall. The *avatāra* of God descending on earth can be compared to a huge prayer hall which is capable of giving shelter to countless spiritual aspirants or seekers of God. The *ishwara-kotis* are like the inner pillars who virtually are responsible for the real strength of the prayer hall. It is because of them that the outer pillars, i.e. the aspirants who are on the fringe, get the support or grace of God. The *ishwara-kotis* develop tremendous spiritual insights about the divine play of the *avatāra* and in turn become conduits for spreading his grace and message. But Sri Rāmakrishna would assure the devotees that even a *jiva-koti* or an ordinary spiritual aspirant can reach the ultimate goal of life or get spiritual illumination through faith, devotion and sincere spiritual struggle.



[The author is the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi.]

SWEET - SOUR ORANGES

Love makes the scales tilt

Almost every other day, a certain gentleman, accompanied by his wife would buy oranges from a particular old lady. She would weigh the oranges and put them in his bag. He would pay her the price she would quote. He would then pick out one orange from the bag, peel it and taste one segment. He would complain that it is sour and give it to the old lady. She would eat one segment from it and retort saying it was quite sweet! However, by then the gentleman and his wife would be gone with the bag of oranges.



One evening, the wife asked this gentleman why he did this drama every single time when every time the oranges were in fact very sweet and flavourful! The gentleman smiled and said – “My dear, have you noticed that the kind old lady sells sweet oranges but never gets to eat them? With this drama, I ensure she gets to eat at least one sweet orange as she sells kilos of those sweet fruits!”

On the street, another vendor who sat next to this old lady also observed this interaction that happened so regularly. One evening she chided and asked the old lady why she bothered to weigh (and give) a little extra for that man who always commented that the fruit was sour.

“Oh! That gentleman just wants to feed me an orange every time he comes to buy them from me. He thinks I don’t know this or imagines that I don’t understand his intentions. I never weigh extra, but the scales tilt a little because of his love” – said the old lady with a smile on her wrinkled face!

A large heart, a sensitive mind and little gestures of unconditional love, expressed in many ways – these make our life indeed more meaningful, fulfilling and satisfactory!

[Story collected and re-narrated by Shalini Keshavan.]

General

Many online discourses were delivered by Swāmiji in the month that passed. Some were guest appearances at other organizations and others were under the banner of FOWAI FORUM / AUPA.

Talk on Handling Loneliness, January 12, 2021:

Swāmiji delivered a 45 mins talk, online, on the topic, “Handling Loneliness,” under the banner of My Retired Life (MRL) Foundation. Prof. A K Sengupta welcomed and Dr V Viswanadhan introduced the speaker. The lecture was followed by a vibrant QA.

Events at Suvarnamukhi Samskriti Dhāma (SSD), Bengaluru:

Tuesday, January 12, Swāmi Vivekānanda Jayanti: The students (6th std thru 9th std) and teachers of the Suvarnamukhi High School gathered on the beautiful lawns near the Lalitāmbikā temple on the campus. Many of them, including the headmaster Mr Chandrasekhar, spoke on the ‘National Youth Day’, and highlighted the inspiration that the nation drew from the life and teachings of Swāmi Vivekānanda. Swāmiji spoke and motivated the boys. Dr Nāgaraju gave the presidential address.

Tuesday, January 26, Republic Day and Founders’ Day: Flag hoisting, patriotic songs, speeches by students in four languages: Kannada, Hindi, English and Sanskrit, and words of inspiration from Swāmiji, Sunil Jayarāj (Secretary of the institution), Shri Mahādeviah (Vice President) and Dr Nāgaraju (President) were the highlights of this function that began at 8.30 am. Beginning later at 10.30 am, the ‘Founders’ Day’ had the recitation of Lalita Sahasra Nāma, Poojā, Worship with 108 names of the Divine Mother etc. Swāmiji and Dr Nāgaraju spoke and both of them, in their own ways, praised the vision, dynamism, broadmindedness and relentless service of late Smt Renukā Nāgaraju who had left for her divine abode on January 25, 2016, after her dream project – Suvarnamukhi Samskriti Dhāma – had been realized in August 2015.

Saturday, January 31, Ahimsā Diwas: The date of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi is observed as the “Non-violence Day”, and an evening function around “Shri Abhaya-Ānjaneya” was held.

Thursday, January 21, 2021, Dialogue on Self-realization: Coordinated by Smt Vāni Vāsudev and Shri Nārāyan Vāsudev, a unique event was held at the residence of Smt Mamathā and Shri Narasimha Prabhu in south Bengaluru. Both Swāmiji and Prabhuji, long-standing Vedānta teachers, got down to a vibrant discussion on various facets of ‘Self-realization’. This was attended (face to face) by some 12 to 15 attentive students, while a large number of interested friends from different parts of the country watched it live over the Internet. The video recording is now available on the YouTube.

Friday, January 29, 2021, Workshop at Vasanta College for Women:

This online event, under the auspices of the “Guidance and Counselling Cell” and the “Alumni Cell” of the college, went off very well. Many faculty members and students of education and psychology attended it. The two talks by Swāmiji and Dr Ambā Pande (of J N U New Delhi) were well received, as evidenced by numerous questions put to them by the participants after their presentations.

Upanishad classes at Khadki near Pune: Brni Vibha Chaitanya ji has been conducting weekly classes at Khadki for many years. These classes have continued through the Covid times by switching over to online mode, and by combining them with the classes for students in the city of Pune.

Regular Weekly Classes on Geetā and Upanishads

On July 8 (India Time) 2020, and on July 17 (both India and US), the FOWAI FORUM started regular weekly classes by Swāmiji on YouTube Live (channel FOWAI). People anywhere in the world now can

watch and attend these classes at 8 am (IST) every Wednesday and 9.30 pm (IST) every Friday respectively. These classes are receiving encouraging response with nearly 150 people attending them from the East and the West.

Every Wednesday, Swāmiji speaks on selected topics of Geetā over Google Meet, under the banner of Suvarnamukhi Samskriti Dhāma. This gets broadcast also on Monday mornings over an FM station in Mysuru.

Webinars

WEBINARS, done:

Swamiji presented two webinars in the month that passed by:

190 on January 3, 2021. Topic: SAYING NO

192 on January 31, 2021. Topic: HIGHLIGHTS of Ishāvāsya Upanishad

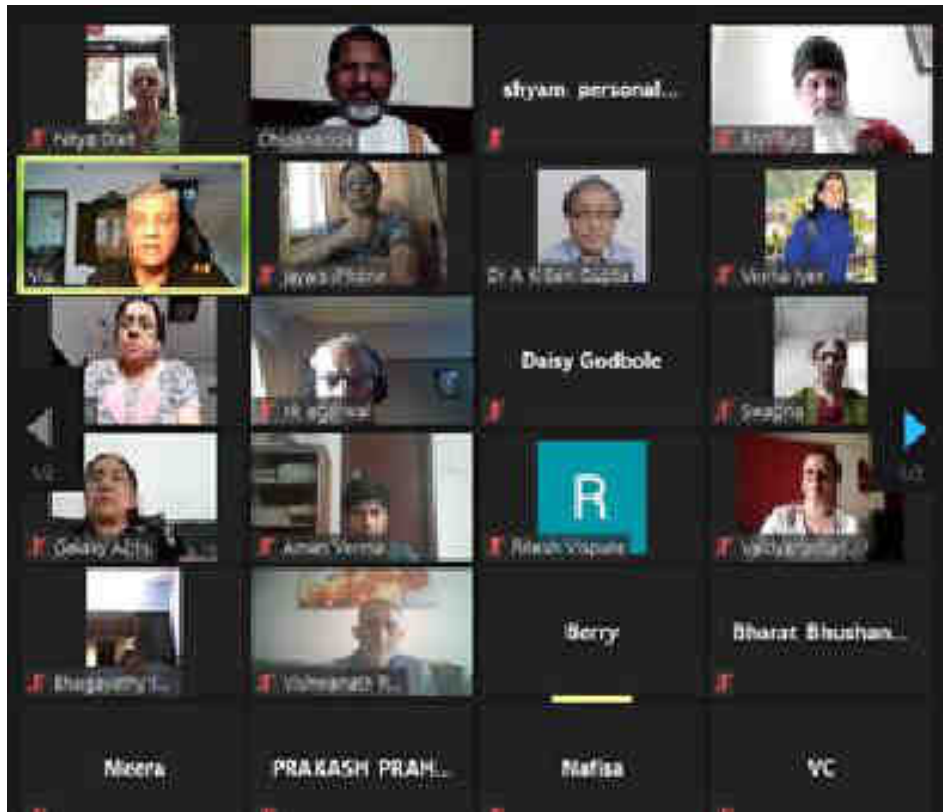
Shri Siddhārth Krishna from Rishikesh presented the following webinar:

191 on January 17, 2021. Topic: Aspects of Karma Yoga

WEBINARS, to come up:

We will have webinars 193 (by Cdr Guruprasād) and 194 on February 14 and 28 respectively. The second speaker and the two topics will be announced.

[Those who wish to join the webinars may please write to fowaiforum@yahoo.com]



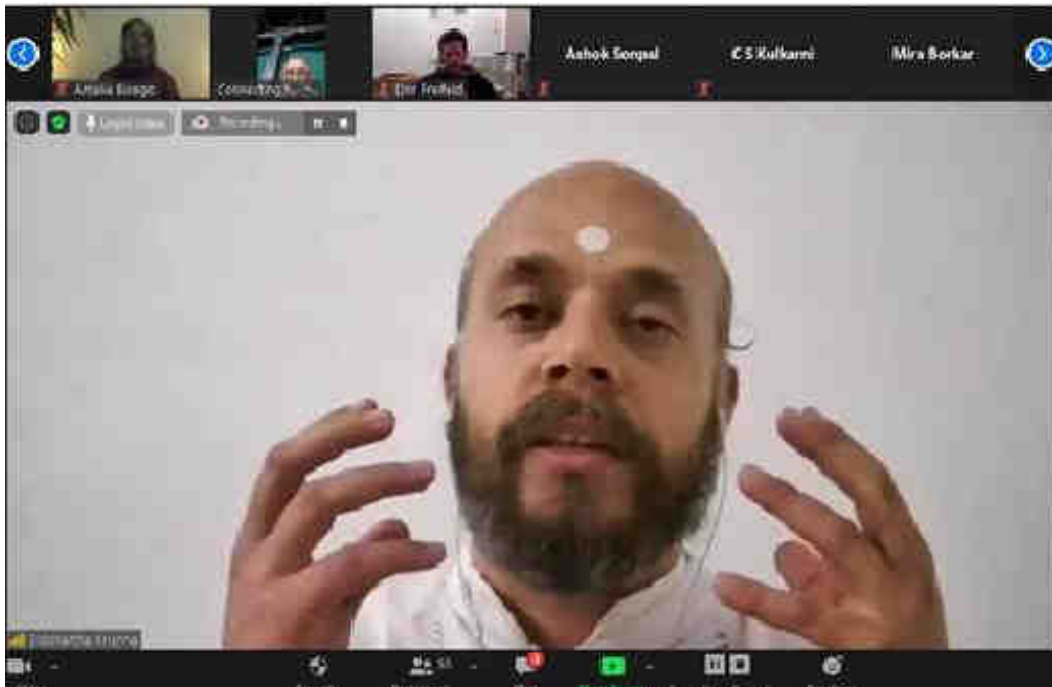
About 50 participants were seen on the screen at the session for MRL Foundation, Jan 12, 2021



Smt Vani Vasudev introduces Shri Narasimha Prabhu, Jan 21, 2021



Swamiji speaking at Shri Narasimha Prabhu's residence, Jan 21, 2021



Shri Siddharth Krishna presents a webinar, Jan 17, 2021



Suvarnamukhi High School celebrated Swami Vivekananda's birthday, Jan 12, 2021.



Jan 12 Swamiji and Dr Nagaraju on the lawns of Suvarnamukhi Samskriti Dhama



Key members of the management of Suvarnamukhi Samskriti Dhāma (SSD) and teaching staff on the Republic Day, Jan 26, 2021



SSD observed its "Founders' Day" on January 26. Smt Renuka Nagaraju (1949 - 2016) had envisioned this āshram and holistic education centre.



Some 75 teachers and students of Vasanta College for Women attended the Workshop on Stress Management, Jan 29, 2021 (Swamiji, Dr Amba Pande, Principal Prof Alka Singh and Coordinator Dr Sujata Saha seen in top row in the screenshot.)



Ahimsā Diwas was observed at SSD on January 30, 2021 (the punya-tithi of Mahātma Gāndhi)



Swāmi Nārāyanānanda ji of Bālāji Temple, San Jose, Ca and Pandit Shambhunāth from Flint, Michigan, visited SSD and felicitated Dr Nāgaraju and Swāmiji, Feb 1, 2021.



Vedānta classes have been going on at Khadki (Pune) for years, conducted by Brni Vibhā Chaitanya ji. Some of the regular students seen here during a visit by Swāmiji.

Upcoming Events

The weekly classes on Geetā and Upanishads will continue.

7 Evenings Lecture Series: The Meditation and Study Circle, which Smt Vāni Vāsudev and Shri Nārāyan Vāsudev oversee, used to hold a 7 days Retreat every year in February. Because of Covid-19, they are organizing 7 online lectures beginning on February 14. Swāmiji will deliver the first lecture on the inaugural day, with the topic “Meditation: The return to the root of your being”. Those who wish to join may directly write to narayan.vasudev@gmail.com

Tuesday 16th February, 2021 Vasant Panchami

Vasant Panchami is the festival dedicated to Goddess Saraswati who is the Goddess of knowledge, language, music and all the arts. She symbolizes creative energy and power in all its forms.



May Goddess Saraswati bless all with the ocean of knowledge which never ends!

Team AUPA wishes the readers a Happy Vasant Panchami

(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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