

A MOTHER'S LOVE

Vedanta Center of Atlanta

Br. Shankara

May 3, 2020

GOOD MORNING ... ANNOUNCEMENTS Coronavirus: Center will remain closed in May, except for evening Arati, which is now at 6:30, and private practice of meditation.

All classes and talks are live-streamed using Zoom. Information about this is on the Center's website, in your e-newsletter, and on our Facebook page. Recordings of all classes and talks are available, soon after they are given, on the Center's YouTube channel.

Please plan to attend the Center's Annual Meeting of the Congregation on May 17th at 11am, using Zoom. You will hear reports from your Board of Trustees, and from me. And, as usual, we will elect Trustees for the coming year.

During May and June we're inviting guest speakers to offer us talks, using the Zoom app. We'll keep you posted through the website, our Facebook page, and your e-newsletter.

I'm happy to report that on May 24th, Br. Dhruva **will** talk with us, via Zoom, about Chapter 12 of the Bhagavad Gita.

And on June 14th, we'll hear from Ryan NeuCollins about her experience as a householder, following the teachings of Nisargadatta Maharaj.

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!

CHANT • POEM:

MA AND PA IN GEORGIA

After we have finished worshipping Her
in our shrine on a Saturday or a Tuesday,
Sri Sarada slips out of Her red-bordered
sari and puts on a simple house dress.

Then, you may find Her in the kitchen
of their North Georgia hill country cabin,
chopping vegetables, soaking kidney beans
for chili or red beans and rice, or skinning
the fish that Rakhal catches in a nearby pond.

He doesn't live with Ma and Pa. The Master
has Him busy working all over the world —
maybe you've heard of his adventures
in Hollywood, California and in Brazil!

Sometimes though, if you're lucky, you'll
find Mother out on their front porch, pickin'
a lively tune on Her banjo and watching
the Master and Ramana Maharshi dance.

WELCOME • TOPIC

A MOTHER'S LOVE

May is a month for study of Karma Yoga, a spiritual path leading to the abandonment of selfishness. As a karma yogi, you practice offering your actions and their results, as well as your perceptions, thoughts, and feelings to the Divine Presence.

Even before fully knowing this Presence, you hold firmly to the belief that the Presence *is within* each person or other living being that you interact with or serve. Working and abiding in this spirit, you are increasingly able to release attachment to your activities and their results. This yields the freedom and contentment promised by Karma Yoga.

“Even a little practice of this yoga will save you from the terrible wheel of rebirth and death ...” — Sri Krishna, Bhagavad Gita, Ch. 2

A Mother's Love

Swami Swahananda, head of the Vedanta Society of Southern California (VSSC), took responsibility for the Vedanta Center of Atlanta when Swami Yogeshanandaji retired. Swahananda was very devoted to the Divine Mother.

He encouraged some of his disciples to study the *Devi Mahatmyam* (Chandi — 700 Verses in Praise of the Goddess of the Universe). When Swahananda left the body in 2012, Swami Sarvadevananda took charge of the VSSC, and our Center. He also encourages some of his disciples to study the Chandi, and what it teaches us about the Divine Mother.

Following not meant as instruction:

It is observation and speculation. We are all trying to make sense of what we see in the world right now. This is an attempt from here.

Take what you like.

The Chandi tells of three instances in which the Goddess rescues the world from demonic forces (*called asuras and daityas*). In each instance these beings, who are said to “hate righteousness,” overpower the Mother’s servants (devas or gods).

“Robbed of their prowess,” the devas can no longer sustain and protect Earth — who is Herself a goddess or devi — and all the life forms that live here with Her. **(EXPOUND: BC forester, etc.)**

Eah time, the helpless devas explain their situation to the Divine Mother and plead for Her help. She is moved by their plight, and Her love of **all** Her children.

Drawing every deva’s power unto Herself, the Mother defeats the demonic forces and restores order. Each of the Chandi’s three stories tells a tale of great carnage and destruction, as the Mother overcomes Her violent, arrogant, defiant children.

From here, what is happening right now around the world looks very much like the opening of another chapter of the Chandi. This morning, we will explain why that thought arose, and discuss how the Divine Mother may be purifying and lifting up all of Creation — including Her children of demonic nature. **(EXPOUND)**

As the Chandi’s first story opens, Brahma — the god in charge of Creation — says to the Divine Mother, His Mother,:

“You are the great knowledge and the great illusion, the great intelligence, the great memory and the great delusion, the great goddess and the great demoness.” Brahma praises Her, and pleads on behalf of the devas for her to confound, and slay, those unassailable asuras, Madhu and Kaiṭabha.

She does, and as part of the next story — the defeat of the Great Demon Mahisasura — these remarkable phrases are sung by Indra, king of the gods, and the hosts of devas and sages for whom Mother has won this second victory:

“The world attains happiness when you slay its foes, and though they may have committed enough evil to keep them long in torment, even as you strike down our enemies, O Devī, you think, ‘May they reach heaven through death in battle with me.’

“Why does your mere glance not reduce all asuras to ashes? Because when assailed by your weapons and thus purified, even those adversaries may attain the higher worlds. Even toward them your intentions are most gracious.

“If the intense light flashing frightfully from your sword or the glaring brilliance of your spearpoint did not blind the asuras’ eyes, it was because you made them behold the moonlike radiance beaming from your face.

“O Devī, your nature is to subdue the misconduct of the wicked. Others cannot equal your inconceivable grace, for even while your might destroys those who have wrested power from the gods, you show compassion toward those very foes.”

Testimony of three saints:

St. Catherine of Siena —

“Strange,” she once said, “that so much suffering is caused because of the misunderstanding of God’s true nature. God’s heart is more gentle than the Virgin Mary’s first kiss upon the Christ. And God’s forgiveness to all, to any thought or act, is more certain than our own being.”

Hafiz —

EACH SOUL COMPLETES ME

My

Beloved said,

“My name is not complete without
yours.”

I thought:

How could a human’s worth ever be such?

And God, knowing all our thoughts—and all our
thoughts are innocent steps on the path—
then addressed my
heart,

God revealed

a sublime truth to the world,
when He
sang,

“I am made whole by your life. Each soul,
each soul completes
me.”

And Swami Vivekananda, singing about Sri Ramakrishna in *Breaker of This World’s Chain*:

“Love, who art partial to none, we are equal before Thy sight ...”

DISCUSSION AND COMMENTARY

Closing chant