

Virtual Satsang
Whatever Begins Must End: Swamiji's Message
on these challenging times of COVID-19 pandemic – 9 April 2020

Aum Amritheshwaryai Namah

My prostrations at Amma's sacred lotus feet and my namaskarams, love and greetings to all of Amma's children.

COVID-19, the infectious coronavirus disease, is wiping out the lives of thousands of people across the world. Let us open our hearts and pray together for the peaceful transition of the deceased, for the mental peace of their grieving relatives and family members, for the speedy recovery of those infected by the disease and for the spiritual strength and self-confidence of the rest of humanity. Let us also bow down to the selfless health workers all over the world for their dedicated services.

This deadly virus has now afflicted nearly 1.5 million people in 211 countries around the world. It has taken the precious lives of more than 82,000 people, yet, there seems to be no end to this pandemic. Our world is going through a critical phase. People are gripped by intense fear and anxiety. All over the world people are probably thinking the same thing; is the world going to end? Is death knocking at our door? Will I be infected? What is in store for me? Will I lose my job? What if I lose all my savings?

Terrifying thoughts such as these can petrify us, but while such fears are understandable, we must not allow ourselves to be overpowered by them. We must move forward with the utmost caution, not only physically and also emotionally, intellectually and in particular spiritually. We must not allow self-defeating thoughts to penetrate deep into our minds. If they do, we can fall prey to depression and mental illness. Hence let us prepare ourselves by being alert and attentive. How can we spend our time during this lockdown period in a productive and creative manner?

1. Don't think unnecessarily. Do not allow unhealthy and damaging thoughts to gush into and occupy the mind. In this situation, logic and intellect are less important than faith, which should be given the upper hand. By faith I mean faith in ourselves, faith in the power of God, faith in the law of nature, the universe and faith in the law and order of our government and administration and in their instructions.
2. Anxiety and thoughts that intensify inner conflict and tension are not answers to any problem. They will only dissipate your mental strength you have. Remember Amma's words, there are only two situations in life; problems or situations that can be solved, and problems or situations that cannot be resolved. No one worries about a situation that can be solved and there is no point worrying about a situation that cannot be resolved. Go ahead and worry about everything else other than these two.

3. Try to see Covid-19 as nature's law or her emissary to remind us of one of the most important lessons we have forgotten. As Amma says, nature is mightier than any force on earth, save God. If we declare war against her our defeat is as good as guaranteed. Hence let us bow down reverentially and worshipfully before that power, let us accept defeat and surrender to that power. The tools we need to practice are; self surrender, meditation, chanting of the Guru mantra, singing divine names, prayers, yoga, eating sattvic food, etc. A spiritual life based on these practices will boost our self-confidence, mental strength and peace.
4. Consider this period as an occasion to spend quality time with family. Spend these days learning the lessons of genuine love and compassion, and try to understand each other's likes and dislikes. Viewed from this perspective, you will see that this situation is not a curse, but a blessing to turn inward, introspect, to evaluate our thoughts and actions, thereby fostering greater awareness about the purpose of life, our surroundings, nature, natural forces, the power beyond, our fellow humans and other living beings. As Amma says, we are not isolated islands but links of a chain, the universal chain. Whether we know it or not, all our actions impact others. Therefore, creating a change within ourselves is more important than trying to change others. Once we change, others will automatically change in our presence. Always remember this.
5. Those who have a taste for or talent in the various arts, literature, reading or cooking, can spend these days further exploring their inner potential. Businessmen can think of innovative ideas to enhance the competitive edge of their businesses or even extend their entrepreneurial skills to other fields. These are precious moments to polish and refine our talents through constant practice and contemplation.
6. Please refrain from watching violent or emotionally lurid, third-rate movies, soaps and television programs. Do not engage in violent video games. Do not waste your time reading shallow and non-authoritative books. They will not help you in any way, rather they will only stimulate your emotions. Instead, read the scriptures, Amma's books, books on the life and teachings of great spiritual masters, or books that will strengthen your morale and inspire and stimulate your inner potential. Or listen to speeches and engage in discussions that will enhance your self-confidence, awaken the love within, kindle your faith, and make you feel cheerful.

The Hindu faith prescribes chaturmasya vrata, a vow that lasts four months, during which one engages in tapas, intense spiritual practices. This is observed by all spiritual seekers and sannyasi's, monks. It begins in June/July and ends in October/November. Perhaps we should all take the lockdown as our own ekamasya vrata; one month dedicated for spiritual practices. Hopefully it won't become a dumasya vratta; two months, but we really do not know. We have no choice but to surrender and see what comes.

So let us try to see this period of confinement that COVID-19 as a wonderful opportunity that nature has created to help us focus on our spiritual practices. Life is indeed a tapas. Tapas is necessary to dive deep into any aspect of life. Let us forge ahead with a faith that this confinement is a Godsend to learn the harder realities of life through tapas.

Instead of accepting the one and only truth, the truth about the oneness of God; human beings have created divisions and polarization both within and outside us. We have been fighting in the name of differences, greed and selfish motives. Let us see this opportunity as a classroom where God has brought us all together in that hope that we, his or her children, can learn the lessons of love, unity and selflessness, through tapas. Let us move forward in the light of this understanding and not feel weakened or stymied by the fear triggered by the virus.

Whatever begins must end. The coronavirus disease also began somewhere; hence, it must come to an end someday. When? No accurate answer can be given. We can only wait patiently with love and hope. We can only pray and meditate. This, too, shall pass. Until then, hand in hand, let us be united while cautiously taking each step on this untraveled path.

I sincerely pray to our most beloved Amma to bestow on us the necessary spiritual strength, devotion, courage, and self-confidence, and to bless us all so that we can win this battle against one of the biggest challenges the human race has ever fought.

Aum Amriteshwaryai Namah