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The Ribhu Gita The Joy of Abiding As We Are

Let us imagine ourselves sitting in front of Sri Bhagavan either in Virupaksha Cave or in Skandasramam while we chant a soul-stirring text that describes Sri Bhagavan's state of abidance in the one reality. Sitting in rock-like stillness, radiating ineffable peace, his very presence quietens the turbulence of our minds. As we continue reciting, we are absorbed into ulladu – into that which is, our own real being. The sacred text referred to is none other than the Ribhu Gita, whose study Sri Bhagavan recommended to some devotees as a valuable aid in their spiritual growth.

Sri Ramaswami Pillai recalls his initial visits to Sri Bhagavan in the early 1920s:

“Even in his absence, or even when I was away from the Ashram, I used to think of his person and of his name, and I would experience the sinking of all thoughts into the Self. During my stay of ten months at the Ashram, we often used to read the *Ribhu Gita*. There would usually be six or seven of us including Bhagavan, and we would each read a few verses in turn, going all the way through the book until we had finished it. Bhagavan used to tell us, and on occasions we used to feel and experience, that to read the *Ribhu Gita* is to be in *samadhi*. Viswanathan, Muruganar, Chinnaswami, and anyone else who was present would all squat together in a ring with Bhagavan and take it in turns to read – no other book was read so often...”¹

The *Ribhu Gita* is found in the text of the epic *Sivarahasya*. Originally written in Sanskrit, the *Sivarahasya* contains about 100,000 verses. The exact epoch in which this work was composed or revealed cannot be established with any certainty. It is comprised of twelve *amsas*, or parts. In the sixth *amsa* of this epic is found the *Ribhu Gita*.² It is a dialogue between the sage Ribhu and his disciple Nidagha that takes place on Mount Kedara in the

Himalayas. The topic of the discussion is the nature of the supreme Brahman and how that one reality is our very own nature. Ribhu was taught this sacred knowledge by Siva himself and he compassionately imparts this *upadesa* to Nidagha. Just as the gem of the *Bhagavad Gita* is found in the middle of the *Mahabharata*, Paramacharya Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati has declared that the *Ribhu Gita* occupies the same exalted place and status in the *Sivarahasya*. The *Ribhu Gita* was translated into Tamil (*Ribhu Gitai*) in the 1880s by Sri Lokanatha Swamigal (Bikshu Sastri). It was first brought to Sri Bhagavan by Palaniswami while they were residing in the Mango Tree Grove and it was this Tamil version that was chanted in front of Sri Bhagavan. It differs somewhat from the original Sanskrit version with regard to the form of each verse as well as the

1. The Mountain Path, July, 1981 - MP Ramaswami Pillai, *How I Came to Sri Bhagavan*

2. The entirety of the original Sanskrit Ribhu Gita has been translated into English by Sri Lingeshwara Rao, Anil Sharma and Sri T. Venkateswara Rao. The original text, along with transliteration and translation has been published by Sri Ramanasramam. In addition, a beautiful audio recording of the entire work by Sri Lingeshwara Rao is available in MP3 format.

numbering of the chapters (the original has fifty chapters while there are only forty-four in the translation). While the Sanskrit version is presented in couplet form, that is, with two lines in each verse as is the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Tamil version contains eight lines in each verse (*viruttam*). Both versions, of course, are uncompromising in their message that nothing but Brahman exists, and that we are that. And both use the power of repetition to drive that message home. The *Ribhu Gitai* is comprised of 1,924 verses.

Sri Bhagavan recalls:

“I knew nothing of life and had no idea that it was full of sorrow; and I had no desire to avoid rebirth or seek release, to obtain dispassion (*vairagya*) or salvation. I had read no books other than *Periapuranam*, my Bible lessons and bits of Tayumanavar or *Tevaram*. My notion of God (or Isvara as I called the infinite but personal deity) was similar to that found in the Puranas. I had not heard then of Brahman, samsara, etc. I had no idea then that there was an essence or impersonal real underlying everything, and that myself and Isvara were both identical with it. At Tiruvannamalai, as I listened to *Ribhu Gita* and other works, I picked up these facts and discovered that these books were analysing and naming what I had previously felt intuitively without analysis and name. In the language of the books, I should describe my mental or spiritual condition after the awakening, as *suddha manas* or *vijnana*, i.e., the Intuition of the Illumined.”³

Sri Bhagavan further describes the love of the Sage Ribhu for Nidagha and further explains the nature of the *Ribhu Gita*:

“Though Ribhu had several disciples he had some special affection for Nidagha because of his thorough knowledge of the sastras, his pure mind and great devotion to the guru. Ribhu taught him in great detail and clarity the essentials of Advaita philosophy. Even so, his sishya’s mind was steeped largely in the performance of karma and so he could not keep steady on the path of *jnana* taught by the guru. He was performing all the rituals as laid down in Karma-Kanda and went to live in his native place. Even though he was living far away, the guru’s concern for Nidagha was growing from day to day. So Ribhu was going to Nidagha’s place now and then to see how far he was getting disassociated from the Karma-Kanda

(performance of karma). Once in a while he used to go incognito also.

On one occasion, Ribhu went in the guise of a villager and found Nidagha standing and watching the king coming out of the Raj Bhavan in a royal procession. Nidagha did not notice Ribhu coming from behind. The latter wanted to test Nidagha and so said, ‘Why is there a big crowd here?’

Nidagha: (without looking behind and not knowing who the questioner was) The Rajah is going in a procession.

Ribhu: Oho! The Rajah is going in a procession! Who is the Rajah?

Nidagha: There you see. The one on the elephant; that is the Rajah.

Ribhu: What? What do you say? Did you say that the Rajah is on the elephant? Yes. I see both of them. But who is the Rajah and who is the elephant?

Nidagha: What is all this nonsense? You say you can see both. Don’t you know the one above is Rajah and the one below is the elephant?

Ribhu: What? What did you say? Please tell me clearly.

Nidagha: What a nuisance! It is difficult to explain anything to a man like you. How often should I tell you the same thing? Now listen. The one above is the Rajah and the one below is the elephant. Have you understood it now at least?

Ribhu: I am sorry. Please don’t get angry with a simpleton like myself. I pray, one more word. You say above and below. My dear sir, please tell me what exactly it means.

Nidagha: (with great anger) How funny! You can see the one above; that is the Rajah. The one below is the elephant. What nonsense do you mean by saying that you do not know what is above and what is below?

Ribhu: Yes. Yes! It is true. I see both. But I do not understand what is meant by above and below.

Nidagha: (unable to contain his anger) What nonsense! If you cannot understand that which is obvious and visible the only way to make you understand is to give you a practical demonstration. I shall do so now. Bend down. You will then understand everything fully.

That rustic labourer bent down as directed. Nidagha sat on him and said, ‘Now, now look. Do you

3. Self Realization, pp. 19-24 by B.V. Narasimhaswami

understand? I am above you like the Rajah, and you are below me, like the elephant. Is it all right? Do you understand clearly?

Ribhu: No. I have not yet understood. I am still unable to know the meaning. You say you are above me like the Rajah and that I am under you like the elephant. I am able to understand to the extent that the Rajah is above and the elephant is below. You say, 'you' and 'I.' That I am not able to understand. Whom are you addressing when you say 'you' and 'I'? Please explain this clearly in some detail. He said all that in a calm and dignified tone.

When Nidagha heard this question aimed at him pointedly, he realised the nonexistence of separate entities as 'you' and 'I' and that they merge in the consciousness of the Self. So instinctively, he realised his mistake, jumped down and fell at the feet of the rustic, who he felt could be none other than his guru as he had made his mind turn from outer distinctions to the TRUTH that is the Self. He folded his hands and expressed his deep gratitude for the great revelation and thanked him for all that he had done for him. Ribhu again explained to him the state of reality and taught him how to abide in the Self. That teaching is *Ribhu Gita*.

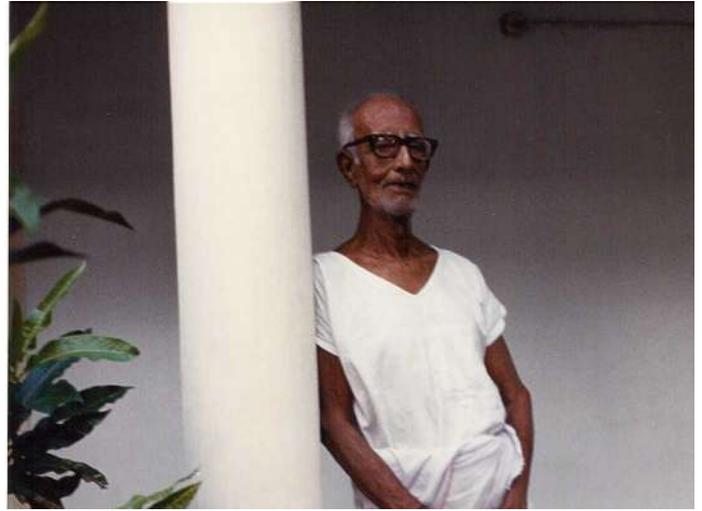
'In that Gita the Self and the Self alone is dealt with at great length.' So said Bhagavan."⁴

Sampurnamma, whose close association with Sri Bhagavan is well-known and who spent unforgettable moments working in the kitchen under his direct supervision, was asked by Sri Bhagavan to read the *Ribhu Gita*. She says, "One day he gave me a copy of *Ribhu Gita* and asked me to study it. I was not at all anxious to pore over a difficult text good only for learned pandits, and asked to be excused, saying that I did not understand a single word of it. "It does not matter that you do not understand," he said, "Still it will be of great benefit to you."⁵

Sri Bhagavan's longstanding devotee, Professor N.R. Krishnamoorthy Aiyer (Head of the Department of Physics in the American College, Madurai) also was encouraged by Sri Bhagavan himself to study the *Ribhu Gita* and to include it in his sadhana.

The Professor originally translated eight verses into English for his own study and to distribute to devotees. In 1982, The Mountain Path published a collection of 27 verses translated by him.⁶

Professor Krishnamoorthy Aiyer further translated a



Professor N.R. Krishnamoorthy Aiyer

total of 122 verses into English prose which were published as the booklet titled "The Essence of the Ribhu Gita" in 1984. Here are some verses from *The Essence of the Ribhu Gita*:

5 The universe was neither born, nor maintained, nor dissolved; this is the plain truth. The basic screen of pure Being-Awareness-Stillness devoid of all the moving shadow pictures of name and form of the universe is the sole, eternal Existence.

(Chapter 2 Verse 33)

6 Some may argue that this universe of duality (multiple existences) is a factual second reality clearly seen by the senses operated by the mind. But then, are the senses anything apart from the mind? Can they function without the support of the mind in which they are embedded? What is this mind except a bundle of thoughts? What are thoughts except evanescent ripples in the still, limitless ocean of pure Being-Awareness-Self which is the sole Existence without a second? (Ch. 2, v. 34)

7 The existence of the illusion of silver in the mother of pearl is not a reality apart from the reality of the mother of pearl which is the basic reality. The illusion of the universe is based on the mind, which again is an illusion based on the still Awareness-Being Self. (Ch. 2, v.35)

10 The state of firm abidance in that thought-free, alert Awareness-Self, constitutes integral perfection, *yoga*, wisdom, *moksha*, *sahaja-samadhi*, the state of

4. Letters from Sri Ramanasramam, by Suri Nagamma, Letter 182, 25th April 1948

5. *Bhagavan in the Kitchen*, Ramana Smrti Souvenir, 1980

6. *Verses from the Ribhu Gita*, The Mountain Path, April 1982

Siva, and the state of *Atman-Self*, which scriptures proclaim by the title of Brahman. (Ch. 5, v. 26)

11 There never was a mind nor any of its countless forms like world, *jivas* etc. There isn't the least doubt that all these are the form of the eternally undifferentiable Supreme Brahman Self. This is the Truth. The one who hears this great secret diligently and understands completely, abides as Brahman-Self (Ch. 5, v. 28)

31 Abidance in *sahaja-samadhi* is the hallmark of *jivan mukti*. With the progressive development of this state, the intensity of blissful peace is attained, leading on to the four successive stages of perfection in *mukti*. Nothing short of this technique of Self-Enquiry will be of any avail in destroying the fearsome cycle of births and deaths. (Ch. 18, v. 41)

32 The realised person who abides in the Brahman-Self and has lost all feelings of differentiation of Self and non-self is the *jnani* or *mukta-purusha*. Such a *jnani* is rare to find by searching among millions of people. If one has the lucky opportunity of getting his *darshan* (personal view and contact) one attains purification from all sins, and what is more, such a person's ego gets well set on the road to its liquidation. (Ch.19, v. 10)

40 Abidance in the state of thought-free alert awareness is the state of *mukti* beyond thought and expression. The emergence of thought is the bondage of untold suffering. Abidance in the Self is the true non-dual *samadhi*, and that alone could lead one to the eternal bliss of *mukti*. (Ch. 21, v. 41)

41 The great illusions: *maya* (associated with God Iswara), *avidya* (associated with individual souls), mind and *jivas* (souls), world and its creator, all names and forms, and all mental conceptions are nothing but the Self. One should ever abide in this conviction. (Ch. 22, v.23)

42 All worlds and creatures are only thought forms. They are nothing but the mind which is a bundle of thoughts, which again are nothing more than ripples on the still ocean of Awareness-Self, and certainly nothing apart from that Self. Therefore, one should abide in the firm conviction that all objects are only I am Self-Brahman. (Ch. 22, v. 24)

The following Tamil text and transliteration is representative of the eight-line stanzas found in the *Ribhu Gitai* and is from Chapter 26. The English translation is by Dr. Ramamoorthy and Nome.⁷ The

English translation also follows the eight-line form:

எதனிடையிற் றேகமுதற் றெரியா தாகு
மெதனிடையிற் றிருசியமே திகழா தாகு
மெதனிடையிற் சித்தமுமே மரித்துப் போகு
மெதனிடையிற் சீவனுமே கலந்த தாகு
மெதனிடையி னினைவெவையும் லயித்துப் போகு
மெதனிடையி னிச்சயமு நசித்த தாகு
மதுவகமென் றதிதிடமா நிச்ச யத்தா
லம்மயமா யநவரதஞ் சுகித்தி ருப்பாய். (32)

etan̄ṭaiyir̄ rēkamutar̄ reriyā dākum
etan̄ṭaiyir̄ riruciyamē tikaḷā dākum
etan̄ṭaiyir̄ cittamumē marittup pōgum
etan̄ṭaiyir̄ cīvaṇumē kalanta dākum
etan̄ṭaiyi n̄inaivevaiyum layittup pōgum
etan̄ṭaiyi n̄iccayamu nacitta dākum
atuvakameṇ ratitiṭamā nicca yattāl
ammayamā yanavaratañ cukitti ruppāy. (32)

That in which the body and others cannot be discerned,

In which there is no perception of manifestation whatsoever,

In which the thought itself is destroyed,

In which merges the jiva,

In which all the imaginings get dissolved,

And in which even certitude disappears,

By the deep conviction that 'I am That',

Be in the Bliss of ever being That itself. (32)

We see that the *Ribhu Gita* is uncompromising in its non-dualistic approach, continually emphasizing the oneness of all in stating that all is the one undifferentiated Self, and that our essential nature is indeed that. There is no faltering in its approach, nor is there the least hesitancy to proclaim the unreality of all phenomena when seen apart from the underlying Reality.

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

The chanting of the entire Ribhu Gitai in Tamil is accessible on Sri Ramanasramam's website [here](#). The chanting of Chapter 26 in Tamil by Sri J. Jayaraman with accompanying English translation is available on Sri Ram Mohan's website [here](#).

7. Dr. Ramamoorthy and Nome, The Song of Ribhu, published by the Society of Abidance in Truth, U.S.A., 2000

The Baby-Squirrel Mind

As the last vestiges of the winter pass over the Nova Scotia ashrama, we see signs of the birds and animals increasing their activities and welcoming the warmer weather. During a recent visit, while walking towards the mountain, we noticed the squirrels emerging from their holes in the trees, cautiously looking about, and slowly making their way toward the cache of nuts and foodstuffs that were stored outside and that they had utilized to survive the winter. Carefully watching all directions for any sign of danger and instinctively knowing that once outside of the protective environment of their nest they could be themselves a meal for large predators, they quickly took what was required and hastily retreated to their zone of safety. There they could be seen very contentedly enjoying their meal, relaxed and content in the knowledge that they were protected.

This moment, observing the squirrels rushing outside into danger then retreating back into the safety of their nest, brought to mind the kindness with which Sri Bhagavan treated all living beings, including squirrels, taking care of them and protecting them from harm. In doing this, Sri Bhagavan also instructed us in how to go inwards and rest contented in the Heart, the source of all. Sri Bhagavan's attendant Rangaswami recalls the following event: "Another day the district collector from Vellore came to see Bhagavan. The little squirrels were close by in their nest. A cat had taken their mother. The



The squirrel emerges into the snow from the safety of its nest. (Photo by Atul Sharma)

responsibility of looking after them now fell on Bhagavan. He said, 'These children do not know that it is to their advantage if they confine themselves to their nest. All the problems are outside, but they cannot resist the temptation of going out. Similarly, if the mind settles down in the heart without straying, there is no problem. But it cannot help going out.'

'What is the method of restraining it?' I asked.

'Just the same as I am doing here. Whenever the squirrels come out, I put them back. The more we put them back, the more they learn to stay put. Then we can relax.'"

May our baby-squirrel mind rest contentedly in the Heart-nest, as advised by Sri Bhagavan!

– Editor

35. To discern and abide in the ever-present reality is true attainment. All other attainments are like powers enjoyed in a dream. When the sleeper wakes, are they real? Those who stay in the state of truth, having cast off the unreal – will they ever be deluded?

36. If we think we are the body, then to tell ourselves, 'No, I am that' (*aham Brahmasmi*), is helpful to abide as that. Yet since we ever abide as that, why should we always think, 'I am that'? Does one ever think to himself, 'I am a man'?

– *Forty Verses on Reality (Ulladu Narpadu)*

Bhagavan Initiates Me in a Dream

by Sri Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawata

Sri Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawata, the founder of Arunachala Ashrama, describes the sacred initiation given to him in a dream by Sri Bhagavan. The following is from his book, In Search of Self, published by Arunachala Ashrama. This inspiring collection of Sri Bhagawata's writings has been carefully gone through and edited by Margo Martin, who has been closely associated with the Ashrama since its inception.

– January 6th, 1966 Brooklyn, New York

In the recesses of the lotus-shaped Hearts of all, beginning with Vishnu, there shines as pure intellect (Absolute Consciousness) the Paramatman, who is the same as Arunachala or Ramana. When the mind melts with love of Him, and reaches the inmost recess of the Heart wherein He dwells as the Beloved, the subtle eye of pure intellect opens and He reveals Himself as Pure Consciousness.

– Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala
by Sri Ramana Maharshi

Arunachala Shiva Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, the Guru, God and Grace, has always been present in my life. Whether I am aware of His Grace or not, His Grace has all along been inundating my Heart and I have been immersed in it. A great thing happened to me on the night of Wednesday, January 5th, 1966, in the living room of our apartment, H4, 533 East Second Street, Brooklyn, New York. The great Guru Ramana in His infinite Mercy gave me formal initiation by placing His right hand on my head and instructing me to meditate on the Heart by watching the breath and the sound.

That Wednesday night, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi came to me in a dream. I was sleeping on the couch in the living room, my head facing south and both legs stretched towards north. In the first part of the dream I saw Mouni Sadhu coming from the south. He looked exactly like the picture in his first book, *In Days of Great Peace*. He did not look cheerful at all and appeared apologetic from his countenance. Then the scene flitted away – I saw his picture move in and move out in the same instant. I don't know what happened after that.

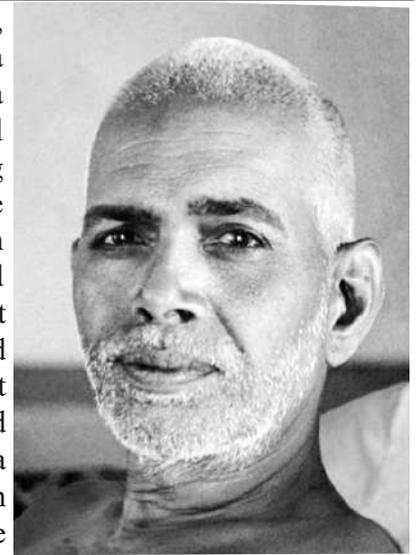
Later, the same night, Bhagavan Ramana appeared to me in a dream. I saw His tall figure approaching me. He came to the armrest of the couch on which my head was resting. He sat down near my head and placed His right hand on my head and sat like this for a while. Also, Bhagavan began to instruct me in Hindi, my mother tongue, in these words:

“Dekho hridaya ke ander se kahaan se avaaaz aatee hai. Jahaan se avaaaz aatee hai, usee par dhyaan karo.” It may be translated into English thus: “*Watch wherefrom the sound emanates in the Heart. Meditate on the center wherefrom the sound emanates.*” This instruction of Bhagavan continues to reverberate in my Heart and ears even now, as though the great Guru Ramana is leading me to the Heart.

I don't remember what time of the night it was, but I remember the dream so vividly as if it is before me right now. I also don't know how long the dream lasted or when I woke, but on waking the picture of the Initiation given to me in the dream remained fresh and vivid. I thanked Bhagavan for blessing me by giving me direct initiation by look, touch and sound. This is the greatest thing to have happened to me after that memorable night of Wednesday, October 13th, 1954 when Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi gave me darshan in a dream the first time.

I must admit that I have seen Bhagavan in dream many other times as well. Once in my village, Sahuri, near Barauni Junction in North Bihar, India, Bhagavan appeared to me in a dream. Near my house there is a temple in which Bhagavan Rama, Mother Sita and brother Lakshman along with Hanumanji are worshipped. In the same temple there is a Shiva Linga also and we worship it. In those days I used to go to the temple to pour water on the Shiva Linga and then spend some time meditating on Bhagavan.

One night I saw a dream – in it I saw Bhagavan Ramana descending from the ceiling of the Shiva temple. He directly descended on the Shiva Linga and merged in it. By this Bhagavan strengthened my faith



Sri Bhagavan

that He and Shiva are one and the same. This dream is also as clear and vivid to me now as it was when I saw it years ago. I do not remember the date and year of this wonderful experience; it was probably around 1959. Again, this dream confirmed the truth that Bhagavan Ramana is none other than Lord Shiva Himself.

During the last twelve years Bhagavan has slowly but steadily drawn me to His Lotus Feet, and the time has now come when I have no other desire but to remain immersed in Him. Whatever I may want and whatever work life brings to me, the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan remain the one and only goal for me.

There are various incidents in my life which go to show that Bhagavan Ramana has made me His own servitor. I don't want to do anything but to serve my great Guru, God and Grace as His humble and unassuming servitor.

Since Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi came into my life more than twelve years ago, He has been leading me by the hand. These years have been the years of wandering, searching, seeking and marching towards the peak of the Arunachala Hill. I must admit that I have been undergoing a series of financial difficulties and nowhere have I found work that would give me security. In these circumstances we might have gone to pieces, but the Lord of Arunachala, the great Ramana, in His Infinite Mercy, has been showering upon us His Munificent Grace and Blessings so that

we are saved from the scorching heat of financial instability. This is the great tapasya through which Bhagavan has been making us discipline our lives so that in the future we may have nothing more to do than serve Arunachala. Salutations and prostrations to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, who is abiding in my Heart all the time and leading me on to the Supreme Goal.



*Bust of Sri Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawata
by James Hartel*

Updates

Due to continuing health restrictions, Arunachala Ashrama, New York remains closed to visitors until further notice. Please visit our [home page](#) for the latest information. The Ashrama has been having regular satsangs online which can be found on our [upcoming virtual events](#) page

The Nova Scotia Arunachala Ashrama (see our [home page](#)) will be welcoming overnight guests beginning May 11, 2022. Guests are required to make arrangements ahead of time by contacting nova-scotia@ashrama.org and submitting proof of being fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Guests will be responsible for cooking vegetarian food during their stay and ensuring that their rooms have been cleaned and their linens and towels are laundered and replaced before they leave.

As usual, the Mandiram is open to daytime visitors for prayers and meditation. We ask that groups call ahead of time to avoid exceeding our limit based on NS COVID19 restrictions. Tel: 902-824-2297

For a listing of other centers that are offering virtual satsangs at this time, please see our [online satsangs](#).

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