

Gurukulam in Saylorsburg celebrates its 28th anniversary

Gurukulam in the morning of 17 August 2014

Report by SwamijiVilasanandaSaraswati



Pujya Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati has not missed the 28th anniversary of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam at Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania USA. His presence was felt as rain fell before the early morning *abhiṣekam* to Sri Dakṣiṇāmūrti and stopped an hour later at the conclusion of the *pūjā*. Later at the culmination of the anniversary celebration, Pujya Swamiji made his surprise entrance by Skype. He saw all the crowd gathered there and spoke to them.

In the morning, the whole ashram sparkled with a happy glow as the more than thousand guests began arriving. Many volunteers bustled here and there joyously preparing the banquet in the kitchen, setting up the stage in the main tent, arranging the books and AIM for Seva stalls in the adjacent tent and the flowers and table settings in the banquet tent.

Never had I seen the gurukulam so beautiful. With Pujya Swamiji in my heart I walked around the whole ashram capturing the beauty of this vortex of spiritual knowledge that reaches out to the entire western hemisphere and beyond. I began with the East side of the Śri Dakṣiṇāmūrti and Śri Ganeśa Temple and lecture hall complex and continued past the main entrance, climbing the slope to the north side mound, witnessing the panoramic view of the whole ashram, the white anniversary pavilion, the main parking lot, the activity center for yoga and children's activities, the many guest lodgings and student rooms and wide open spaces with lush green lawns, trees, flowers and shrubs. Descending and rounding the ashram on the main circular road, I turned to the right and entered the wide open scenic beauty of the Shanti Trail, including the panoramic view from the gazebo lookout post, then returned to the southwest side of the ashram main road

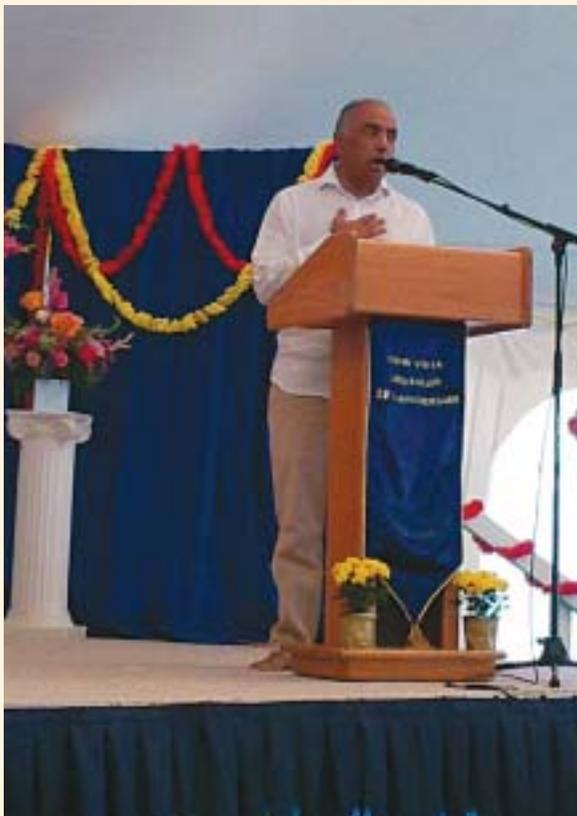


and continued back to the Śrī Dakṣiṇāmūrti and Śrī Gaṇeśa Temple complex.

The Hindustani classical music concert with Pandit Mukesh Desai, vocalist, Aditya Narayan Banerjee, tabla, and Jai Gandhi, flute, was just getting underway as the

guests took their seats and filled the hall. Entering the registration tent I enjoyed the many stands with books and DVDs, AIM for Seva displays and Seva store handicraft items for sale.





Taking my seat in the main tent, I continued to enjoy the unparalleled and rapturous music concert.

Following the concert the Swamijis and chief guest were honored. The board members and dignitaries were also recognized and honored. Rangarajan Venkataraman (Raju) and Mrs. Lata Raju coordinated the entire anniversary celebration.

Tejas Gosai had been appointed by PujyaSwamiji to be the Master of Ceremonies. He had come to the Gurukulam as a small boy when his younger brother was one year old. Now an American citizen, he has absorbed his native culture and values by attending the gurukulam's programs for children and youth and continues to partake in the adult programs. Tejas has become a successful

lawyer and radiates joy. He said the gurukulam helps keep your heritage and sanity. He explained that ArshaVidya Gurukulam was established in 1986 and offers Vedanta classes, yoga, astrology and other classical disciplines comprising the Vedic culture and spiritual heritage of India. A gurukulam is a residential center for learning from a guru. Pujya Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati is a guru without parallel and possesses limitless compassion, Tejas pointed out.

Chief Guest, Mr. Sanjiv Ahuja, Former President of Telcordia [Bellcore] spoke about the great blessings that the gurukulam offers to the world.

Book releases followed the heart-felt address of Mr. Ahuja:
“Prārthanā atpadī” by Swami Tattvavidanandaji and “Sanskrit was a World Language” by Niranjan Shah

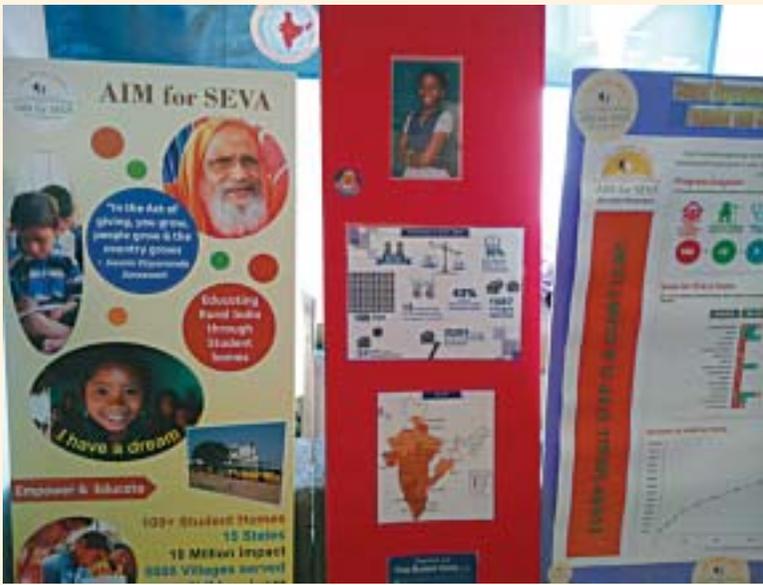
Mr. Terry Coe, who has been a student and teacher at the gurukulam for 25 years read the congratulatory letters from the president of the United States and federal and state officials.

LETTER FROM PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA (read by Terry Coe):

I am pleased to join in celebrating your 28th Anniversary.

Throughout our nation’s history, places of worship have brought us together in the spirit of faith and love. Offering space for celebration in times of joy and comfort in times of uncertainty, they help foster a strong sense of community and call on us to meet life’s most sacred responsibility — to give of ourselves in service to others.





Piyush Shah led the Fundraising as apple cider was served to all guests. Piyush spoke genuinely from the heart without any showmanship or pressuring as donations were gathered for meeting the annual operating expenses of the gurukulam.

Swami Tadatmanandaji spoke, followed by Swami Pratyagbodhanandaji's address.

Then came the great unannounced surprise. On the large screen, there appeared an image of Pujya Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati peering into the scene via Skype. He waved to all the guests and asked if we could see him. After an exchange of greetings between the guests and PujyaSwamiji, Swamiji began by saying, "Our gurukulam is going strong and it will become strong. You are all there and it will become big."

Pujya Swamiji also mentioned the congratulation letter the Gurukulam received from President Obama. There were around 800 to 900 guests in the hall, less than the more than thousand guests who

would attend when PujyaSwamiji came in person, but from here on out the gurukulam can only keep on growing and blessing more and more seekers and sincere students and devotees.

After PujyaSwamiji spoke to the guests by Skype, his pre-recorded anniversary address "Mahimā (Greatness) of Satsaṅga" was shown. This was followed by Sri Swami Vidadatmanandaji's address, which continued the topic by offering many examples of

Satsaṅgawith *sat-puruṣas* taken from the poet Tulsidas and from the *BhāgavataPurāṇa*.

Gurukulam manager, Sri Suddhatma Chaitanya, gave the vote of thanks.

Then came the banquet lunch. After lunch the anniversary celebration concluded with a question and answer session led by Sri Swami Vidadatmanandaji.

The swamis' addresses are being prepared for uploading to YouTube. Please check for them at:

www.youtube.com/user/AVGSatsang/videos

"The Greatness of Satsaṅga" by Pujya Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati is already available there. My transcription of PujyaSwamiji's 28th anniversary talk is as follows

Namaste to everybody. Many of you wait for this anniversary day. There are people who are very regular. They say that they are regularly attending our programs. I ask



thoughts, their teaching. They are the *sat-puruṣas*. And with those *sat-puruṣas* to be in harmony is to go all the way up. They become conduits for the message of the *upaniṣads* to reach you, of the *Gita* to reach you. They are the *sat-puruṣas*.

What brings about a change is the direct connection. You cannot sit in Saylorburg all the time and enjoy the classes. The direct *satsaṅgis* not possible for various reasons, but you can have indirect *satsaṅg*, in that case.

These are days when you can have an i-pad. You can keep the swamiji in your pocket. Somebody boasted to me, "I have you in my hand."

So, this is direct listening also, having known the person, it is *satsaṅg*. Reading a book is a *satsaṅg*, because your mind is with the mind of that person when you read. That's how you change. Nobody changes without the association of the *sat-puruṣas*. *Satsaṅgatvenis-saṅgatvam*. *Nis-saṅgatvenir-mohatvam*. *Satsaṅgabring*s about a change.

Every one of you comes to this place, has a story to tell of how you changed. Change takes place by association of people either

them how long they have been coming. They come for every anniversary. They have not missed any anniversary program.

I am missing the program. Due to my health reasons I am not able to come there. Yet I want to speak to you all for a few minutes. They asked me to talk on *satsaṅga*. It is a fascinating topic. *Satām sat-puruṣāṅgāṅgah*, *satsaṅgah*. *Satsaṅga* is *sat-puruṣāṅgāṅgah*. *Sat-puruṣas* are people who have achieved spiritual knowledge and those who are pursuing the spiritual knowledge. Both are *sat-puruṣas*. *Teṣāṅgāṅgah* means association with them.

Association is not "hanging out". Association is being in harmony with their thinking, with their ways of living. That is association. If one has to change, one has to be in harmony with the people who have already changed. There is no other way of changing. You can do this in two ways. One, directly, by coming and sitting, listening to them, understanding them. This is *satsaṅga*. And those who are teaching, whom you listen to, themselves should be in harmony with the *ṛṣis*, with their



directly or indirectly, reading, listening. The quote is a verse in *Bhajaḡovindam*, which is a book of conversion. It's a book of *puruṣārtha* conversion. *Bhajaḡovindam*, *bhajaḡovindam*. If you analyze all the verses, it's all *puruṣārtha*. *Ārtham, kāmam...* It is all *puruṣārtha*. *Ārthamanārtham, bhavayaletyam*. *Puruṣārtha* means, what is aspired by every *puruṣa*, *puruṣaiḡharthyate*, not *puruṣeḡarthyate*. *Sarvaiḡpuruṣaiḡ arthyate iti puruṣārthah*.

What is aspired by every person, *puruṣa* means not male, every person. *Puruṣaiḡsarvaiḡharthyateitipuruṣārthah*. These are commonly pursued, like wealth. Wealth-seeking is for security, gain, power etc. Then *kāma*, pleasures. It's not one person, everyone seeks pleasure. These are *puruṣārthas*. People all go after them. The book addresses them and it tells the limitations of these pursuits and then says to seek the people who can teach you. Seek *satsaḡḡ*.

Satsaḡḡ brings about the change. Then the *satsaḡḡatvam* will come. *Satsaḡḡatvenis-saḡḡatvam*.

When you are interested in this, then you disassociate yourself from that which you were avidly seeking. *Satsaḡḡatvenis-saḡḡatvam*. *Nis-saḡḡatvenir-mohatvam*. Previously there was some value, priorities for all of them. And the value is *moha*, is due to exaggerated perception, wrong perception. *Moha* goes away because of association of *sat puruṣas*. False values, false priorities go away. When you are interested in one thing, then that is your priority. Somebody calls you for *satsaḡḡ*, you would say, "I have no time," because, there is no interest, there is no priority. Then, if you get interested in *satsaḡḡ*, if somebody calls you for a show, you will say, "I have no

time, I have to go to *satsaḡḡ*." You have time only for what you have interest in.

This is how you change. You heave yourself to another level of perception, another level of thinking, another way of living. Priorities change because interests change. Interests change because understanding has changed, my understanding about the *puruṣārthas*. What is it that I am looking for? I am looking for a way of life in which I seek a better happiness, more security, and this more happiness and security is but sense. Centered on yourself, centered on I, there is security, there is joy, all by *satsaḡḡ*, due to *satsaḡḡ*.

That is what the teaching is. There is a sense of incompleteness on the part of everybody. What one seeks is this completeness. In terms of security, in terms of fullness, one seeks that security and happiness.

The perception of oneself is I am insecure; I am incomplete. There is something missing in me. The teaching is, yes, there is something missing. Knowledge of your self is what is missing. You are what you want to be. Every time you are happy, you are yourself. Every time you are at peace, you are at your self. If for a few moments I am at peace with myself because of some situational changes, then you can be at peace with yourself for good, with the world for good.

Similarly, that I am seeking happiness becomes a silly thing. Happiness is not an object to seek. You are happiness. You are peace. Thank you all. Have a good anniversary.