

Arsha Vidya , London, UK

London is a long, long way from Coimbatore, both physically and culturally. The differences must have seemed dramatic to Swamini Atmaprakashananda when she first arrived here from southern India in 2004. She had been brought up in a very sheltered, highly disciplined environment whose religion and values were so very different to what she now faced, alone, as she began to find her way in this strange country.

Pujya Swami Dayananda, very much aware of the difficulties she would be facing in establishing an Arsha Vidya centre there, blessed her efforts. Since those early days, Arsha Vidya UK students have travelled many times to Anaikatti and elsewhere to meet and listen to Pujya Swamiji. Right from our first visit we were more than delighted with what we found. All subsequent ones have been unfailingly enriching, but that first one was truly special. We met a man who made no effort to make a good impression and yet did so; we met a man who spoke brilliantly, yet ensuring that it was not him but what he was saying that shone. Small wonder we were so impressed with his disciple!

And yet, on meeting Pujya Swamiji we already knew him. Not because of the books we had read – yes, we had already devoured everything we could get hold of – but because we had (unknowingly) already met him in our own ācārya, Swamini Atmaprakashananda. Not only do her words, her phrasing, so closely match those of her guru that they could as well be from him, but, just as significantly, her heart, her attitude and values are his too. Never, in all the many years we have had the privilege of listening to her has there ever been the slightest dissonance, variation or conflict with what he says. There is absolutely no doubt that we are being taught Vedanta exactly as he would wish it to be taught, so true is she to his wishes, his methods and bhāva.

Swaminiji continues to make efforts to offer Vedanta wherever she may in the UK, often traveling hundreds of miles to do so. So energetically responsive is she to such requests that her regular weekly schedule can approach being more of a hope than a guide to her classes! And not just because of the UK. Europe, the Middle East, the USA and Australia all make demands on her. All of her students, from Frankfurt to Madrid, from Sydney to Kuwait (not forgetting Coimbatore too) are all in friendly competition for her time. Too bad! London has first claim. It is where she belongs!

Perhaps the best way to express how valuable and satisfying the presence of Arsha Vidya is for the students here is to speak of Swami Dayananda's Gītā Home Study Course.

All of us at Arsha Vidya UK who study Pujya Swamiji's Gītā translation and commentary would probably say that it is exceptional in all respects. One of the several Gītā groups, one that has become in effect a nitya gītā jñāna yajña, studies from 6 am every weekday morning. That group is now in the latter part of Chapter 18 and has, as it were, been entering Pujya Swamiji's mind each weekday over the course of his entire magnum opus. What has been found there is breathtaking in its wisdom and completeness.

His commentary gives due significance to the Gītā's messages. The primacy of puruṣartha niṣcaya, for example, is made abundantly clear from the outset and is continually re-emphasized – and it is indeed pre-eminent: unless and until that is in place nothing else works. The significance and meaning of Śaṅkara's oft-repeated

insistence that knowledge alone liberates – not, as is commonly asserted, a combination of knowledge and action (or of knowledge and experience), but that knowledge alone liberates – is made plain with a logic that is irrefutable. His commentary continually stresses the importance and significance of a student's preparation for knowledge and also reveals the function and rationale of śravanam, mananam and nidhidhyasanam. He clears up the many misconceptions that surround meditation, misconceptions that continue to mislead many here in the West. How values matter and are a significant part of sādhanā is also strongly emphasized. His commentary fully elucidates the roles and the difference in the respective natures of karma-yoga and saṅnyāsa. It reveals the true nature of Īśvara and the importance of his worship; it also shows why prayer and a religious life are vital for mokṣa. Again and again it stresses the supremacy of śāstra, without which none of this would be possible, and frequently provides unsurpassed insights into dharma. He also shows what avidyā actually is – and, just as crucially, what it is not.

Most valuably of all, Pujya Swamiji's translation and commentary, shining as it does with his wisdom, unfailingly gives Lord Kṛṣṇa's vision of reality while omitting nothing from Adi Śaṅkara's magnificent commentary. It makes clear one's true nature and how to live in order to fully ascertain it.

Other classes continue happily here at Arsha Vidya UK, all of them by Swaminiiji. (Please see the list below.) She has now created well over 1,000 audio and (some) video recordings on our website covering all ten principal upaniṣads (except the Kaṭha and Bṛhadāraṇyaka) as well as many prakaraṇa granthas.

Swamini Atmaprakashananda – Weekly [schedule of talks](#) in London.

Mon	Bhagavad Gita	6.00 am – 7.30 am
	Bhagavad Gita	10.30 am – 12.00 pm
	Tattva Bodha	7.30 pm – 9.00 pm
Tue	Mandukya Upanishad	6.00 am – 7.30 am
	Bhagavad Gita	9.00 am – 10.30 am
	Taittiriya Upanishad	7.30 pm – 9.00 pm
Wed	Devi Mahatmyam (with philosophical meaning)	7.30 pm – 9.00 pm
Thu	Bhagavad Gita	7.30 pm – 9.00 pm
Fri	Pancadashi	10.30 am – 12.00 pm
	Vedantasara	7.30 pm – 9.00 pm
Sat	Sanskrit	9.00 am – 10.00 am
	Chandogya Upanishad	10.30 am – 12.00 pm
	Bhagavad Gita	3.30 pm – 5.00 pm
Sun	Chandogya Upanishad	8.30 am – 10.00 am
	Introduction to Vedanta	3.30 pm – 5.00 pm
	Prakarana Grantha	7.30 pm – 9.00 pm

All times: UK time.