

# Uddhavagītā & Gurugītā Retreat

At AVG Anaikatti

The July 13-20<sup>th</sup>, 2019 retreat at Anaikatti, was centered upon the teachings of *Uddhavagītā*, a part of *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*, describing the 24 *Gurus* of *Dattātreya Bhagavāna*, and also *Gurustotram*, which is the essence of *Gurugītā*, a part of the *Skandha Purāṇa*. The topic chosen for the retreat as though resonated with the spirit and excitement of *Gurupūrṇimā*. Everyone felt blessed to attend this retreat especially during this auspicious week, with an opportunity to serve and participate in the *Gurupūrṇimā puja* and associated ceremonies.



Having pointed out how *manuṣyatvam* (to be born as a human), *mumukṣutvam* (desire to be free), and *mahāpuruṣasatsaṅga* (company of a wise person) in one lifetime is indeed a rarity, Swamiji emphasized that a seeker should make the best use of every moment for their spiritual pursuit. That a seeker should develop a learning mind instead of a reactive mind,

because it is a learning mind alone which is objective and is available to learn. Just like in *Uddhavagītā*, the *Avadhūta*, *Dattātreya Bhagavāna* learns from one's own experiences and from the behavior of others. Through the 24 Gurus, it was explained how *Dattātreya Bhagavān* learnt various values, positive lessons to be adopted in life, some counter lessons and the behavior or mindset to forsake in life, which enabled him to abide in the vision that the world is not separate from *Ísvara*. Just as *Dattātreya Bhagavāna* learnt various lessons from objects and situations of day to day life, both insentient objects and sentient beings, similarly a seeker too should have an open mind to learn from the day to day experiences.

Swamiji provided a very systematic explanation on the degree to which the values adopted by *Dattātreya Bhagavān* through his 24 Gurus could be adopted by householders and seekers with varying degree of commitment for spiritual pursuit. It was highlighted that a seeker should excel in one's spiritual pursuit by adopting the positive values such as accommodation, unattachment, contributing and serving others, being satisfied and happy with oneself, be devoid of a sense of ownership of any act of receiving or giving, and a value for objectivity. Swamiji encouraged the seekers to make a deliberate effort for mastery over the 5 senses and their respective objects, concentration or single-pointedness, and getting the essence of the teachings. It was also pointed out that the wrong values such as attachment, expectations from the world, unnecessary accumulation must be forsaken in life to the extent feasible. Through the teachings, an important lesson was also taught - to differentiate the attributes belonging to the body-mind-sense complex from the nature of the self, and recognition of one's true nature as devoid of any association.

The lessons learnt from the 24 Gurus were :

- *From earth* , the value of accommodation and serving others from Earth (1<sup>st</sup> guru).
- From internal *Vāyu or Prāṇa*, the value of being satisfied with simple and purposeful food. From external *Vāyu* the value for unattachment (2<sup>nd</sup> guru) .
- *From Ākāśa*, value for *Asaṅgatā* Or unentanglement (3<sup>rd</sup> Guru).
- *From water*, the value for purity, being sweet, loving and friendly. (4<sup>th</sup> Guru).
- *From fire* , the lesson that *Ātmā* is one but appears many because of the *Upādhi* of body-mind-sense complex. In reality the gradation belongs to the *Upādhi and not the self* (5<sup>th</sup> guru).
- *From moon*, the lesson that modifications belong to the *Upādhi* and not *Ātmā* (6<sup>th</sup> guru).
- *From sun*, the value of giving and receiving without identification. (7<sup>th</sup> Guru).
- *From pigeon*, the counter lesson how overattachment can lead to destruction (8<sup>th</sup> Guru).
- *From python*, the value to be satisfied with whatever comes by *Prārabdha* (9<sup>th</sup> Guru).

- *From ocean*, the value of quietude, profoundness, and be undisturbed by things and situations (10<sup>th</sup> Guru).
- *From moth*, the value of control over sense organs with respect to eyes/form (11<sup>th</sup> Guru).
- *From honey Bee and black bee*, the lessons to avoid taxing others too much, to get essence of everything without getting lost in the supportive science, and to restrain from unnecessary accumulation, were learnt (12<sup>th</sup> Guru).
- *From elephant*, the value of control over sense organs with respect to touch (13<sup>th</sup> Guru).
- *From honey collector*, the lesson of how unnecessary accumulation will be waste of time and money (14<sup>th</sup> Guru).
- *From deer*, the value of control over sense organs with respect to sound (15<sup>th</sup> Guru).
- *From fish*, Control over sense organs with respect to taste from (16<sup>th</sup> Guru).
- *From Pingala, a prostitute*, not to have expectation from the world to be happy. (17<sup>th</sup> Guru).
- *From Osprey (fish-eating bird)*, not to do unnecessary accumulation which can lead to competition (18<sup>th</sup> Guru).
- *From a child*, to be happy with oneself and be carefree by knowledge of self and an attitude of surrender (19<sup>th</sup> Guru).
- *From a young girl kumārī* , to avoid being in crowd (20<sup>th</sup> Guru).
- *From arrow-maker*, the importance of concentration for meditation (21<sup>st</sup> Guru).
- *From snake*, to be inconspicuous and less talkative (22<sup>nd</sup> Guru).
- From spider, the vision how *Īśvara* alone is manifesting as this world (23<sup>rd</sup> Guru).
- *From a particular insect (kṛta)*, to be mindful of the pattern of thinking (because as you think so you become) (24<sup>th</sup> Guru).
- and additionally the value of objectivity to be able to see plus and minus in everything *from the body* (25<sup>th</sup> Guru).

Swamiji particularly emphasized how for any value to be followed a value for the value must be created first. The seekers were further enriched with 3 practical take home messages:

- 1) Observe the world with open mind,
- 2) Learn from all experiences,
- 3) Integrate that learning in one's life to transform oneself.

Besides, the questions and doubts resolved during Satsang provided further clarity to our understanding of the teachings throughout the day. How *Ísvāra* is the order and order is all-pervasive, was elaborately expounded by Swamiji. That an understanding of *Ísvāra* would help a person validate the behavior of others and oneself, and in the process resolve all guilts and hurts. Further clarification was provided by a clear differentiation between validation and justification, that validation is not acknowledging a wrong doing or wrong behavior as right, rather it is the understanding of the behavior and the source of the behavior. Swamiji meticulously comprehended how to understand the behavior, one has to keep on understanding the person, and this requires compassion on our part, and this is exactly how we can assimilate and utilise the understanding of *Ísvāra* as order. The expounding of *Gurustotram* indeed was in keeping with the spirit of this auspicious week of *Gurupūrṇimā*. The *brahmajñāna* received by serving the Guru, who alone is the ultimate truth, who is not only the self but the self of all, who is the cause of everything and yet is causeless, without whom the Vedānta cannot be revealed, to the Guru who is endowed with such glories, such excellence, my salutations at your lotus feet. Indeed, when the Guru is there with you, what else do you require? Guru is Narayana, and Narayana is everything!

What better way to conclude the retreat other than a bhajan on Sadashiva Brahmendraji's kruti, '*Chinta nasti Kila*', sung beautifully by Swami Sadatmanandaji! When and where the vision and spirit of Param Pujya Swami Dayanandaji is followed, how can it not but be a blessing to us seekers?

- **Write up by retreat participant-Ms Prachi Patel.**