

Gita Jayanthi and Swami Dayananda's 80th Birthday Celebrations

Thursday, December 15, 2011

HOUSTON - Arsha Vidya Satsanga celebrated the Bhagavad Gita Jayanti and the 80th birthday of Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswathi at Keshav Smrithi on Sunday, 4th December. The event consisted of a *laghu pooja* to Lord Krishna, Gita chanting, singing and dancing of classical compositions of Swami Dayananda Saraswathi, a video presentation about the life of Pujya Swamiji and recognition of key people of Arsha Vidya Satsanga(AVS), and *prasada bhojanam*.

Gita Jayanti is the day on which Lord Krishna did the teaching of Bhagavad Gita to the Pandava prince Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra.

This day is celebrated by all spiritual seekers as the day of rededication to the study of the song divine- Shrimad Bhagavad Gita. It falls on the Shukla Ekadashi of the Mrigashira Masa. Pandit Viswasankaran Kartick led the chanting of 108 names of Lord Krishna- *Krishna Ashothara Namavali*.

This was followed by the brief Veda parayanam and a vedic arathi. A group of



children who are learning Bhagavad Gita at AVS chanted the Dyana *shlokam* of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita. It was a very encouraging to see kids who are American born achieve a good degree of proper Sanskrit pronunciation. Then, the members of the various AVS Gita home study groups chanted the 10th and 15th chapters of the Bhagwat Gita. AVS conducts Gita home study courses in Sugarland, Bellaire, Clearlake, and Jersey Village. The organization also conducts kids classes in Sugarland and Jersey Village.

Then, it was time to celebrate the eightieth birthday of Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati, a world renowned teacher of Vedanta, and the main inspiration behind AVS. Swamiji completed 80 years in

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August and this was celebrated by his devotees in a grand manner in India and in the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam in Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania. The event is called Satabhishekam in vedic parlance and comprises pujas, yagnas, and other rituals to celebrate the joyous occasion.

Sri Swami Dayananda among his many multifaceted activities is a scholar and lover of both classical music and classical samskrutam. Hence, it came as no surprise that he had composed many songs on the dieties of the Hindu pantheon as well as on Vedanta. These are set to mellifluous music and had been popularized by many leading classical musicians in India and US. The highlight of these compositions are the harmonious synergy between concepts, words, music, and the emotions (bhava) sought to be conveyed by the song. A group of Houston based singers and musicians got together to learn and perform these compositions as their personal tribute to Swamiji. The songs presented include Bhaje Vignarajam (Hamsadhvani), Dakshinamurte Amurte (Ranjani), Shankaracharyam (Mohanam), and Ramam Bhaje (Durga). This was followed by a dance performance of Pujya Swamiji's composition by the students of Guru Padmini Chari. Varenya Hariharan performed Bho Sambho in Revati (one of the most popular pieces of Swamiji) and the Ramachandran sisters (Smrithi and Sathvika) performed Bharata Desha Hitaya in Desh (the theme song for AIM for SEVA). The singing as well as dancing moved the audience very much.

This was followed by a short video about the life of Swami Dayananda Saraswathi. It was remarkable to watch the many

achievements of Swamiji. He has been a traditional teacher of Vedanta teaching several students, founder of the All India Movement for SEVA, the founder of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, given sanyasa diksha to several sadhakas, convener of Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, a composer of songs, a writer of several books, a counsellor to several people, and above all, a compassionate person. When one gets to read or watch a life of such a noble soul who give the entire life for the welfare of humanity without the least expectation, one realizes that the message of Bhagavad Gita was not in vain. The entire audience was highly motivated after this and lot of people committed to a more serious study of the Bhagavad Gita and give more to humanity. The organizers then recognized the students, teachers, and the patrons of AVS. This was followed by Gita Arathi and a simple prasad.

Prahalad Appaji said that for the first time he learned of the Gita Jayanti, his wife Smitha was impressed by Swamiji's accomplishments and that their children got interested in learning the new compositions and that each in the family had become personally enriched. "It would be good to conduct a Houston-wide Gita Jayanti program, seeing that the Bhagavad Gita is a popular scripture," said G. V. Krishnan. Dr. Radhika Hariharan was particularly impressed with "small children chanting the Bhagavad Gita from memory!" Rohini Chandrashekar "was glued to her seat all through the program". After seeing the full breadth of activities, Hirji and Ila Bhudia decided to enroll their two children in the Vedic Heritage classes at Jersey Village.