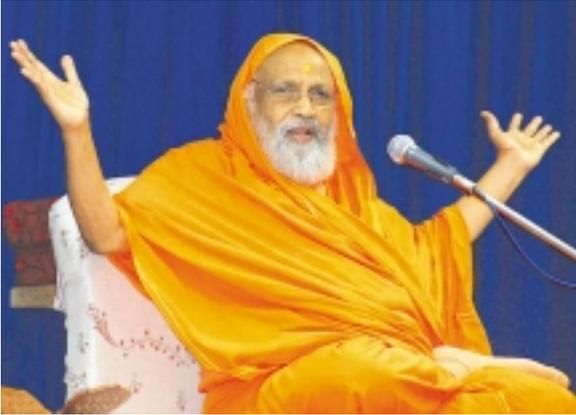


## A Vedic Valedictory Address



“Speak the truth and live the universal dharma”, was the message given to the students by PujyaSwamiji, in his valedictory address, given at the conclusion of the three-month Gita Camp, at AVG, Coimbatore, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 2010.

Dr. Umanath, District Collector and Indhasara Thero, Vice Chancellor of the Pali

University, Sri Lanka, were present at the Valedictory Address.

Dr. Umanath spoke of his appreciation and support of the work of PujyaSwamiji in the local communities. The Vice Chancellor of the Pali University expressed his gratitude for Pujya Swamiji’s interest in the restoration of Sita temple in Sri Lanka.

Sri Rangasai from Guntur garlanded PujyaSwamiji.

Pujya Swamiji then gave a succinct and yet thorough overview for living harmoniously in the world. The first topic was speaking the truth. He described two levels of truth. The first level is making sure that thought and word are in alignment; while the second level entails knowing before one speaks that the thoughts being conveyed are





correct. Two things to be avoided are speaking every thought that comes to one's mind and verbalizing thoughts that are without merit.

Following universal dharma was the second topic. Universal dharma is that which is known to humanity by common sense for which no teaching is required. One has only to know that one avoids pain and does not want to get hurt to understand the inherent nature of this value—a value that is the same for all living beings. Pujya Swamiji pointed out humorously how even a mosquito does not want to be hurt. Through demonstration, he showed that a mosquito's feeding spots of choice are not easily available for slapping with the hand! One can ask, why then does the mosquito bite and cause 'pain' to humans?

Upholding universal dharma only applies to those who are endowed with free will, and not to those that are programmed such as the mosquito.

Humans have free will and hence dharma is needed. All values stem from this one value that none wants to be hurt. Transgression of this value results in guilt. When behaviour is not in alignment with the core person, guilt serves as a braking mechanism. It is a simple and beautiful system that can and must be taught through dialogue to those who do not uphold dharma as a universal value.

While not being hurt is the primary value of dharma, there are many shades. Pujya Swamiji painted a picture of the subtlety of shades through the lens of



cultural etiquette. One must respect the culture one is in, allowing people to be who they are without judging them. While one does not have to follow everything in the culture one is living in, one can conform as much as possible. If, however, one would be required to transgress dharma to conform, one can allow those of the culture their behaviours whilst following one's own culture. For instance, one does not have to eat non-vegetarian food when living in a culture of non-vegetarians.

Given the subtle shades of dharma, there may be times when one is unclear of the correct action. At such times one can ask how best to be respectful of those around one without transgressing dharma. Learning the varying shades is a journey. By living

in the same way as someone committed to dharma, a student can follow in such ajnani's footsteps until the student becomes an expert in his or her own right in dharma and conduct.

It is one of the greatest blessings for a student to have the opportunity to observe a jnani, and to observe PujyaSwamiji is a blessing beyond measure. His commitment to the students is seen not only in His never failing enthusiasm for the teaching, teaching three classes a day, as well as holding satsang every evening, even when satsang questions were few and far between, but also in his insistence to hold classes even after he has traveled all night. The Camp is over but the gift of the teaching will continue.

*Reported by Julie Carpenter*