

## Shankara Jayanthi celebration enthralls Houston

Posted on: Thursday, May 03, 2012

By Sunitha Ramiah and Dr. Vivek Natarajan



**Arsha Vidya Satsanga (AVS), a group dedicated to re-establish the cultural self-identity of Hindus, celebrated the Shankara Jayanthi to commemorate the birthday of jagad guru Sri Adi Shankaracharya – a great reviver of Vedic Sanatana Dharma, at Keshav Smruti, Houston on Apr 21st.**

Shankara Jayanti is celebrated on Vaishaka masa shukla panchami and this celebration was initiated by the 33rd Acharya of Sringeri Sharada Peetam- HH Sachidananda Shivanibhava Narasimha Bharati Swamiji. The program included Guru pooja, recitation of various compositions of Adi-Shankaracharya and Swami Dayananada Saraswati, a play by

children on Adi-Shankaracharya followed by prasada bhojanam.

The program started with a prayer song “Shankaraacharyam Bhajema” composition of Swami Dayananada Saraswati in raga Mohanam sung by Vyjayanthi Vivek. Vyjayanthi is a teacher at Arsha Vidya Satsanga who teaches songs, stotras and bhajans to children of Vedic heritage classes in Sugarland and Jersey village. Prayer song was followed by Ganesha pooja which included Punyahavachanam, Kalasha Sthapanam, Samkalpam Archanai and Ashtotharam. This was followed by Shankaracharya Abhishekam, Ashtotharam and Avadhana Seva. The priests Viswasankaran Kartick and Vivek Natarajan conducted the pooja in a very traditional and reverential manner.

The avadhana seva included recitation of Veda mantras from Taittiriya and Mahanarayana Upanishad. Then, the children from “Arsha Gokulam”, the Jersey village branch of Houston, beautifully rendered the following Sanskrit stotrams by Adi-Shankaracharya - “Ganesha Pancharatnam”, “Shiva Panchakshara Stotram” and “Gurupaduka Stotram”. Children’s interest and hard work was obvious and their Samskritam pronunciation was good. Then Vivek Natarajan gave a commentary on Shankaracharya’s Dakshinamurthy stotram and Soundarya Lahari stotram along with recitation by Dr.Jayakumar Srinivasan and Vyjayanthi Vivek. The

audience was deeply moved during the rendition of the stotrams.

After the pooja, the children enacted Adi Shankaracharya's life in a short 30mins play titled "Bho Shankara". This play was directed by Hasita Kartick, a volunteer at AVS, who engages children in various activities like drama, and stories. Children enthusiastically enacted various parts of Shankara's life - Lord Shiva blessing ShivaGuru and Aryamba with an intelligent but short-lived son; Shankara's student life at the gurukul; his inquisitiveness about Vedas and its vast knowledge; rendition of KanakaDhara stotra to goddess Lakshi seeking her blessings for a poor lady, decision to take Sanyasa; caught by the jaws of crocodile, getting his mother's blessing to become a sanyasi; followed by 4 principal disciples - Padmapaada, Hastaamalaka, Sureshwaraacharya and Totaka, who led the four learning centers (mathas) in India in Dwaraka, Puri, Sringeri and Jyothirmutt respectively.

At the end of the drama, Totakashtakam - an octet of verses in praise of his master, composed by Totaka - a disciple of Adi Shankaracharya, was recited by the children. The evening's program concluded with a vote of thanks from Dr. Jayakumar Srinivasan, the Arsha Vidya and AIM for Seva Houston branch coordinator and the teacher. His love and dedication towards the children reflected in his words. A satvic prasada bhojanam

prepared by the parents and other bhaktas was served right after.

Some of the observations from proud parents and other attendees include: "It was a joy to see children enacting the entire drama and the thought provoking philosophical discourse without the use of any scripts."; "The dedication of children, parents, teachers and all the volunteers were very obvious throughout the evening."; "I learned a lot about Adi Sankaracharya" ; "The children were absolutely fantastic."; "The costumes made it look real.". Usha and Subodh Mudda exclaimed: "Words are not enough to explain about the Shankara Jayanti event as it is the BEST one we have attended in years. Insight into the importance of Hindu culture and how Shankaracharya put forth his efforts was expressed in stotras and play very well. Children's performance was memorable."

The Hindu community in Greater Houston is proud and thankful to such a dedicated organization and group of volunteers who are all hands in guiding our children towards discovering their self-identity, thus helping them to blossom from within.

For more details, visit: <http://www.avshouston.org/>

(contact: jkumar64@sbcglobal.net or 713-412-2923)

SOURCE: Voice of Asia newspaper May 4, 2012 issue

Page sponsored by:

**A Well Wisher**