

Inauguration of Long Term Course at AVG



May 1, 2014 – a day marked by an auspicious planetary position for spiritual undertaking and study – was the day of commencement of the fifth long term Vedanta course at AVG. The course is being attended by approximately 75 students. The course is conducted under the guidance of Pujya Swami Dayananda Sarasvati, by Swami Sadatmananda with Swami Shankarananda and Swamini Agamananda.

The day began early with a *Ganapati homam* being performed for all students to be able to complete the course successfully and without any obstacle. A special *puja* was done in the name of every student at the temple of Lord Medha Dakshinamurthy for the successful completion of the course.

Later in the morning, Pujya Sri Swamiji was welcomed into the lecture hall with *purna kumbha*. Led by Swamini Saradananda and Swamini Vedarthananda, a prayer was offered by everyone assembled, followed by the chanting of the *Guru stotram*.

TRUSTEE'S ADDRESS: Sri Ravi Sam, Trustee, AVG, Anaikatti addressed the students: he said that he was happy to see Pujya Sri Swamiji in fine health. He added that Sri Adi Sankara had no choice but to bring back Pujya Sri Swamiji and allow him to continue the teaching of *Vedanta*.

BLESSINGS OF SWAMIS: Sri Swami Paramarthananda said that the students should use the instrument of “*śiśrūṣa*” to gain *ātma jñāna* from the Guru. He

explained that the direct meaning of śīsrūṣa is an intense desire to learn and the implied meaning of śīsrūṣa is serving the Guru and following the instructions of the Guru.

Swami Sarvabhutatmananda, Swami Sudeerananda, Swami Prasanthananda and Swami Brahmaidyananda gave their good wishes to the students for the successful completion of the course.

Swami Brahmatmananda, the Guru of Swami Sadatmananda, who is the *Acharya* of this course, addressed the students. Swami Brahmatmananda, in his talk, mentioned that when he attended a long term course at Sandeepany in 1977, it was two and half years of joy. He learnt all the important texts – from Tattvabodha to Brahma Sutra during the course. He also said that mere scholarship is not adequate: it will become wisdom only when revealed by a Guru. Pujya Sri Swamiji is an embodiment of all values. Values were not to be merely imbibed but to be discovered. The students should invoke the grace of the Guru and have an open mind, an intense desire to learn, and a prayerful attitude. Guru would make the students see *satyam*. After the course, when the students become teachers, the *Rsis* would talk through them and their whole life would be full of joy.

Pujya Sri Swamiji, then, introduced the Acharyas for the course;

Swami Sadatmananda: He has studied under Swami Brahmatmananda, Swami Visharadananda and me. Swamiji has been teaching in Bangalore for 20 years even though he looks young. I decided to give a chance to the next generation. He deserves to have this place. This is not an easy place: it is a hot seat. I let him go through that.

Swami Sankarananda: He has attended a long term course at Nagpur under Swamini

Brahmaprakashananda. Then onwards he is spending his entire time with me. He has attended the long term course at Anaikatti during 2010-2013. He was also teaching Sanskrit. I find him to be a good teacher: he communicates well.

Swamini Agamananda: She attended the first long term course at Piercy. After that, she was in Saylorburg. She has attended all these courses. She has been with me for a long time. She is a Harvard Ph.D. in Vedanta. She is very thorough.

Swamini Saradananda and Swamini Vedarthananda: They are good chanting teachers. They take care of the rituals at the temple.

Brni Medha Mrichika: She has a good grasp of Sanskrit grammar. She can be a great help to those who need help.

Teaching in the course: Pujya Sri Swamiji said that he would teach one class daily during the first three months. He would cover the important portions of the Bhagavad Gita, giving a bird's eye view of the subject matter.

Pujya Sri Swamiji's inaugural class: Pujya Swamiji began by asking this: "every branch of science like physics, biology, psychology and astronomy has a certain concept of reality. I too am taking about reality. Then, what is the difference? *Vedanta* talks about reality which includes other concepts of reality: I do not dismiss your concept of reality, I include your concept. I present the whole.

Five blind people wanted to know how an elephant is. Two of them who felt the body said that it is like a wall. Two of them who felt the legs said that it is like a pillar. The one who felt the trunk said that it is like a hanging root. And, they had a fight about

how the elephant is, each arguing his view to be true. The job in the Gurukulam is to present the elephant in its entirety. We will present the whole. Everything fits in there.

Pujya Swamiji added that “our teachers” will not say that mediocre cannot get knowledge. They take you seriously: they are committed. Therefore, he told the students to take them seriously. He said that the students’ commitment to learn means commitment to the teachers who teach here. He further asked the students to take the teachers seriously if not with reverence, which they will discover.

Pujya Sri Swamiji concluded saying that just as how it is not only the destination but also the journey all the way to Kedarnath that is pleasant, similarly the journey at Anaikatti will also be pleasant.

Distribution of text books: *Tattvabodha* and *Bhagavad Gita* books were distributed to the students by Swami Brahmatmananda.

Sri Sivaprasad, Secretary of Sruti Seva Trust, proposed the vote of thanks.

Acharya’s inaugural class: In the evening, Swami Sadatmananda started the first class of *Tattvabodha*. He talked about the goals

of human beings: the goals of *dharma* (ethics and obligations), *artha* (security), *kama* (pleasure) and *moksha* (freedom, discovery of self- acceptance).

Evening satsang: Swami Pratyagbodhananda gave his best wishes to the students for the successful completion of the course.

Swami Brahmatmananda spoke a few words about Swami Sadatmananda who met him as a higher secondary school student. He said that Swamiji was a topper in school examinations and that he later chose to study engineering. He observed that Swamiji and his friends were committed students who held *satsang* daily in the mornings and evenings and that he always loved Swamiji and his friends for their sincerity.

Then, Pujya Sri Swamiji answered the questions raised by the students. As if reassuring the blessings of *Devas*, cool showers marked the end of a solemn and eventful inaugural day of the long term Vedanta course.

Report by N. Avinashilingam

