



Arsha Vidya Newsletter

Rs. 15/-



"AVG students marching to the first Brahma Sutra Class"



Arsha Vidya Pitham
Swami Dayananda Ashram
Sri Gangadhareswar Trust
Purani Jhadi, Rishikesh
Pin 249 201, Uttarakhand
Ph.0135-2431769
Fax: 0135 2430769
Website: www.dayananda.org
Email: dayas1088@hotmail.com

Board of Trustees:

Chairman:

**Swami Dayananda
Saraswati**

Managing Trustee:

Swami Suddhananda

Trustees:

**Swami Santatmananda
Swami Hamsananda
Sri Rajni Kant
Sri M.G. Srinivasan
Col. Kamal Kumar
Sri M. Rajalingam**

Arsha Vijnana Gurukulam

72, Bharat Nagar
Amaravathi Road, Nagpur
Maharashtra 410 033
Phone: 91-0712-2523768
Email: brahmapra@gmail.com

Board of Trustees

Paramount Trustee:

Swami Dayananda Saraswati

President

Rajashree Shrikant Jichkar,

Secretary

Madhav Babasaheb Solao,

Trustees:

Ramesh Bhaurao Girde
Avinash Narayanprasad Pande
Madhav Chintaman Kinkhede
Ramesh alias Nana Pandurang
Gawande
Rajendra Wamanrao Korde

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

Institute of Vedanta and
Sanskrit
P.O. Box No.1059
Saylorsburg, PA, 18353, USA
Tel: 570-992-2339
Fax: 570-992-7150
570-992-9617
Web Site : "<http://www.arshavidya.org>"
Books Dept. : "<http://books.arshavidya.org>"

Board of Directors:

President:

Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Vice Presidents:

**Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati
Swami Tattvavidananda Saraswati**

Secretary:

Anand Gupta

Treasurer:

Piyush and Avantika Shah

Asst. Secretary:

Dr. Carol Whitfield

Directors:

Drs.N.Balasubramaniam (Bala) &
Arul
Ajay & Bharati Chanchani
Dr.Urmila Gujarathi
Sharad & Lata Pimplaskar
Dr.V.B. Prathikanti & Sakubai
Dr.Sundar Ramaswamy(Dhira) & Usha
Dr.L.Mohan & Vinita Rao
V.B.Somasundaram and Dr.Anasuya
Bhagubhai and Janaki Tailor
Dr.Ashok Chhabra & Martha Doherty
Vijay and Pammi Kapoor

Associate Board of Directors:

Dr.Soma & Nagaveni Avva
Dr.Ravindra Bathina
Dr.Mahesh & Maheswari Desai
Dr.Pramod & Lata Deshmukh
Dr.T.A.Gopal & Lata
Dr.Kamlesh & Smita Gosai
Dr.Haren Joshi & Pratima Tolat
Dr.Arun & Mangala Puranik
G.S. Raman & Gita
Dr.Bhagabat & Pushpalakshmi Sahu
Rakesh Sharma

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

Institute of Vedanta and Sanskrit
Sruti Seva Trust
Anaikatti P.O.
Coimbatore 641 108
Tel. 0422-2657001,
Fax 91-0422-2657002
Web Site : "<http://www.arshavidya.in>"
Email: office@arshavidya.in

Board of Trustees:

Paramount Trustee:

Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Chairman:

R. Santharam

Trustees:

**C. Soundar Raj
P.R.Ramasubrahmaneya Rajhah
Ravi Sam
N.K. Kejriwal
T.A. Kandasamy Pillai
Ravi Gupta
M. Krishnan**

Secretary:

V. Sivaprasad

*Arsha Vidya
Newsletter*

In fearless voice may
we proclaim

The Rishi's message
from all house-tops

And bring the men
of different claim

To a fold of Love
where oneness lasts!



Muṇḍakopaniṣad

Mantra 3



यस्याग्निहोत्रमदर्शमपौर्णमासम्
अचातुर्मास्यमनाग्रयणमतिथिवर्जितं च ।

अहुतमवैश्वदेवमविधिना हुतम्

आसप्तमांस्तस्य लोकान् हिनस्ति ॥ १।२।३

yasyāgnihotramadarśamapaurṇamāsam

acāturmāsyamanāgrayaṇamatithivarjitaṁ ca ।

ahutamavaiśvadevamavidhinā hutam

āsaptamāmstasya lokān hinasti ॥ 1|2|3

yasya – for the one who performs agnihotra; agnihotram – the agnihotra ritual; adarśam – not accompanied by darśa ritual; apaurṇamāsam – not accompanied by paurṇamāsa ritual; acāturmāsyam – without cāturmāsyā ritual; anāgrayaṇam – without āgrayaṇa ritual; atithivarjitaṁ – without worship of guests; avaiśvadevam – without vaiśvadeva ritual; ahutam – not (done) daily; avidhinā hutam – offered without following the stipulations; tasya – for that person; āsaptamām lokān – all the seven worlds; hinasti – destroys.

For the one who performs the agnihotra that is devoid of darśa and paurṇamāsa rituals, without sya ritual, without āgrayaṇa ritual, without worship of atithis, not accompanied by worship of a viśvedevās and not offering oblations in the stipulated manner – for that person the agnihotra ritual destroys all the seven worlds (he does not get the result of the ritual)'

Yasy āgnihotram adarśam apaurṇamāsam: agnihotra that is not accompanied by darśa and paurṇamāsa rituals. An agnihotrin¹ is expected to perform darśa and paurṇamāsa rituals also. Darśa is the karma that is performed on the new moon day and is associated with agnihotra. Agnihotra which is unaccompanied by darśa ritual, is adarśa. Darśa is to be followed by another ritual that is to be done on the full moon day. That is known as paurṇamāsa. Agnihotra which is not accompanied by paurṇamāsa ritual is apaurṇamāsa. Darśa and paurṇamāsa are one ritual really. Only an agnihotrin performs these rituals. The one who is not an agniotrin cannot perform darśa and **paurṇamāsa**. **If mere agnihotra is done daily and properly, it**

¹ The one who performs the agnihotra daily is called agnihotrin

has its own results. But accompanied by darśa paurṇamāsa it has a better result. This is the contention of the śāstra.

Acāturmāsyam: agnihotra not accompanied by cāturmāsyā. Cāturmāsyā karma is performed every fourth month and completed through the year. If this particular ritual is not performed, that agnihotra is called acāturmāsyā.

Anāgrayaṇam : agnihotra not accompanied by āgrayaṇa ritual. Āgrayaṇa ritual is done as the autumn begins, and also during spring. In both these seasons we get new grains. With the new grains one cooks the food and that is offered unto the fire. One can simply perform the agnihotra ritual without the above accompanying rituals. But one should definitely follow a few things mentioned below.

Atithi varjitam : agnihotra not accompanied by worship of guests.² Atithi pūjā refers to entertaining an athithi, a guest, everyday. An athithi is one who comes without prior information. Before one takes one's midday meal, one should come out and look for anyone who is looking for an invitation for bhikṣā. This used to be the daily practice in India. If some one comes, the person should be properly received and given food. This is called atithi pūjā. Atithi varjita means an agnihotra without atithi pūjā.

Ahutam : agnihotra not done daily. One has to do the agnihotra ritual daily. If it is done irregularly, then it is called ahutam. One has got to do it without omissions. Otherwise, all that one has done becomes a waste. If it is not possible at all to perform the ritual on a particular day or days, there are methods for making up the omission. There are prāyaścitta karmās, rituals of atonement. Prāyaścitta karmās cannot be used as an alternative. When one is in a situation where one cannot do it at all, only then can one have that as an option. Ahutam means not done daily solely due to indifference.

Avaiśvadevam : an agnihotra not accompanied by the viśvedevā ritual. This ritual also has to be done every day. In this ritual, the viśve devās, a particular group of deities, ten in number are offered food. This is to be done every day before eating.. There is certain anna śuddhi, purification of food etc., involved in this ritual. If it is not done, that agnihotra is called avaiśva devam.

Avidhinā hutam : agnihotra done without following the rules. There are vidhis, stipulations in doing agnihotra. One has to follow all the steps. One has to do the ritual without omitting any step; otherwise the karma becomes avidhinā hutam, that which is offered without following the stipulations.

² अतिथि पूजनं च अहन्यहन्यक्रियमाणं यस्य । - मुण्डक भाष्यम्

That agnihotrin who performs agnihotra properly and does all the rituals mentioned here, can get any one of the seven lokas³. – bhūḥ, bhuvaḥ, suvaḥ, mahaḥ, janaḥ, tapaḥ and satyam. But if it is not accompanied by all these things, one cannot get any one of them. What happens to that agnihotra?

Āsaptamān lokān hinasti : it destroys all the seven worlds. Here the śruti depicts, through a hyperbole, the results of improperly performed karmas. The statement here is that such karmas destroy all the seven worlds, which means that the person does not get the result of the agnihotra ritual. What he gets is only the āyāsa, tiresome effort, in performing the ritual.⁴ With sun blazing outside when one performs this ritual sitting by the side of the fire, that is great effort. He has to fan the fire every now and then to get it to produce the flames. The smoke produces tears. That is the only result he gets. What denies the result is not adarśa or apaurṇamāsa rituals, but atithi varjitam, avaiśvadevam, ahutam, avidhinā hutam. So, an agnihotrin also must perform daily pañcamahāyajñānās, the five great sacrifices⁵. One of them is atithi pūjā. These daily rituals must be there in one's life; then only is agnihotra effective.

One meaning of himsa is that all the seven lokas including brahma-loka⁶ are denied for this person. Śaṅkara gives another meaning also. If a person does agnihotra of the above type, he will not get any piṇḍodaka, oblations of rice-balls and water.⁷

For seven generations there will not be any person to perform śrāddaha, a ritual performed at the death anniversary of one's parents.

Therefore, karmas like agnihotra should be performed properly. The daily life must be proper, śrāddaha must be there and the rituals should be done in time. This is the nature of karma. It is continued in the next mantra.

To be continued...

³ These are the svargas – heavens, said to be successively higher than the previous ones in terms of quality of enjoyment.

⁴ तस्य कर्तुः लोकान् हिनस्ति हिन्स्तीव आयास-मात्र-फलत्वात् ॥ ते लोकाः एवेभ्य तेन अग्निहोत्रादि कर्मणा तु अप्राप्यत्वाद् हिंस्यन्ते इव । आयासमात्रम् त्वव्यभिचारीत्यतो हिनस्ति इत्युच्यते - मुण्डक भाष्यम्

⁵ अध्यापनं ब्रह्मयज्ञः पितृयज्ञस्तु तर्पणम् । होमो दैवो बलिर्भौतो नृपयज्ञोऽतिथिपूजनम् ॥ मनुस्मृतिः 3.70.71

⁶ आसप्तमान् सप्तम सहितान् । मुण्डक भाष्यम्

⁷ पिण्ड दानाद्यनुग्रहेण वा सम्बध्यमानाः पितृ पितामह प्रपितामहाः पुत्र पौत्र प्रपौत्राः स्वात्मोपकारकाः सप्त लोका उक्त प्रकारेण अग्निहोत्रादिना न भवन्ति इति हिंस्यते इत्युच्यते - मुण्डक भाष्यम्

Śrī Rudram

Anuvāka 4

नमः॑ क्षत्तु॑भ्यस्संग्र॑हिद्वि॒भ्यश्च वो नमः॑ । ११ ॥

नामाह॑न् कश्चा॑स्तत॒न्निब॑हया॒ध्नस॑सा॒व्रगरा॑ह॒सिन्निब॑हया॒ध्नन्ना॑ व॒खत् नामा॑ह॒न् ज ११ज

namaḥ – salutation; kṣatrbhyaḥ – to the charioteers (who train the charioteers), saṅgrahītrbhyḥ to those who wield the reins; ca –and vaḥ – to you; namaḥ – salutation.

Salutation to you in the form of charioteers (who train the charioteers) and those who wield the reins.

Namaḥ kṣatrbhyaḥ – Salutation to the one who is in the form of charioteers who are śikṣakās, who teach people how to do sārathya, charioteering. The Lord is the one who is in the form of trainers of charioteering, the guru. He is also saṅgrahītr, one who is holding the reins, the charioteer, the disciple. My salutation to the Lord who is both of them.

नमस्त॑क्ष॒भ्यो रथ॑कारेभ्यश्च वो नमः॑ । १२ ॥

nāmastakṣabhyo rathakārebhyaśca vo namaḥ । 12 ॥

namaḥ – salutation; takṣabhyaḥ – to the carpenters; rathakārebhyaḥ – to the chariot makers; ca – and; vaḥ – to you; namaḥ – salutation.

Salutation to you in the form of carpenters and chariot-makers.

Namaḥ takṣabhyaḥ – Salutation to the one who is a carpenters. Rathakārah is an architect who has a plan and design for the chariot. Takṣaḥ puts things together and creates a chariot in keeping with the design. It is like a computer operator and the designer of the hardware and software. These are all to be included now. Any knowledge has to be revealed in the language that the recipients know. The language of the ṛṣis being Sanskrit, what is revealed is in Sanskrit. The ṛṣis did not have the knowledge of computers. Bhagavān is not restricted to the knowledge of the ṛṣis and so we include the computer knowledge too.

Kṛṣṇa says in the tenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā that any glory, vibhūti is me. In this section, the Lord says everything is me, whether there is vibhūti or whether they are ordinary carpenters of the expert rathakārs, both are me.

नमः॑ कु॒ला॒रेभ्यः॑ क॒र्म॒रेभ्यश्च॑ वो नमः॑ ॥ १३ ॥

nāmaḥ kulārebhyaḥ karmārebhyaśca vo namaḥ ॥ 13 ॥

namaḥ – salutation; kulārebhyaḥ – to the potmakers; karmārebhyaḥ – to the blacksmiths; ca = and; vaḥ – to you; namaḥ – salutation.

Salutation to you in the form of pot-makers and blacksmiths.

Kulāla is a pot-maker, a maker of any earthenware, such as a vase and so on. Karmāra is a blacksmith. Any metal work is done by karmāras. In this section of sarvātmavta, nobody is left out.

नमः पुंजिष्टेभ्यो निषादेभ्यश्च वो नमः ॥ १४ ॥

namāḥ puñjiṣṭebhyaḥ niṣādebhyaśca vo namaḥ || 14 ||

namaḥ – salutation; puñjiṣṭebhyaḥ – to those who are bird-catchers; niṣādebhyaḥ – to the fishermen; ca and vaḥ – to you; namaḥ – salutation.

Salutation to you who are in the form of bird-catchers and fishermen.

Puñjiṣṭas are people who set traps and catch different types of birds. They then sell or eat them. Niṣādas are people who earn their livelihood by catching fish for their food and also for selling. These days even devotees do poultry and leather business. But the Lord includes them all.

नम इषुकृद्भ्यो धन्वकृद्भ्यश्च वो नमः ॥ १५ ॥

namā iṣukṛdbhyaḥ dhanvākṛdbhyaśca vo namaḥ || 15 ||

namaḥ – salutation; iṣukṛdbhyaḥ – to those who make arrows; dhanvākṛdbhyaḥ – to those who make bows; ca – and; vaḥ – to you; namaḥ – salutation.

Salutation to you in the form of those who make arrows and bows.

Iṣukṛts are those who make arrows. Dhanvakṛts are those who make the bows. The Lord is both.

नमो मृगयुभ्यश्चनिभ्यश्च वो नमः ॥ १६ ॥

namo mṛgayubhyaśṣvanibhyaśca vo namaḥ || 16 ||

namaḥ – salutation; mṛgayubhyaḥ – to those who hunt animals; ṣvanibhyaḥ – to those who lead the dogs while hunting; ca –and; vaḥ – to you; namaḥ – salutation.

Salutation to you in the form of those who hunt animals and who take the dogs out on leash while hunting.

Mṛgayus¹ are hunters who hunt deer and other animals in the forest for food and to make a living. Chinese medicines have a lot of substances derived from animal body parts. The word mṛga can mean either deer in particular or animals in general. People with dogs hunt and those without dogs also hunt.

नमः श्वभ्यः श्वपतिभ्यश्च वो नमः ॥ १७ ॥

namāḥ śvabhyaḥ śvāpatibhyaś vo namaḥ || 17 ||

Salutations to you the one who is in the form of dogs and dog owners.

The Lord is the very dogs themselves. And he is śvapatis, those who own dogs and train them.

¹ The derivation of the word 'mṛgayu': mṛgam yāttiti mṛgayug – one who goes after (hunts) an animal.

Brahma Sutra Class at AVG



Anaikatti Gurukulam on June 13, 2013 had a festive look with flowers and festoons decorated all over the place. The students expressed their utmost shradha and bakthi to the Vedantic teaching and to their beloved Guru Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati in a traditional manner.

At 7 AM, Deva Puja to Lord Dakshinamoorthy was done at the temple with eleven special offerings. Swamini Saradananda and Swamini Vedarthananda guided the puja.

At 8.30 AM, Sastra Puja was done as per sampradaya. The students kept Brahma

Sutra books at the Dakshinamoorthy temple. Puja was done to the books. Swami Sakshatkritananda gave the books to the students. The students placed the books on their head and went around the Gurukulam in a procession. The procession was a clear testimony of the commitment the students had for the Sastra. Later the books were kept in the lecture hall.

At 9.30 AM, Guru Puja was done with heart felt devotion. Pujya Swamiji sat on the special vehicle named "Jnana Ratha". The vehicle was fully decorated with flowers. Swamis and students pulled the Jnana



Ratha. All the students stood in one line at the entrance of the lecture hall with flowers in their hand. Each and every student offered flowers to Pujya Swamiji and worshipped him.

Purna kumba was offered to Pujya Swamiji when he entered the lecture hall. On behalf of all the students, Swami Sankarananda performed pada puja to Pujya Swamiji. As per tradition, various offerings were made to Pujya Swamiji. He was also offered a flower crown.

At 10.30 AM, Brahma Sutra class formally begun. Santi pada from the Upanishads and Dakshinamoorthy Stotram were chanted. The students mentally prostrated at the end of every Dakshinamoorthy Stotra. Pujya Swamiji started his teaching with zeal and enthusiasm.

Pujya Swamiji first uttered Om. Then he recited the first four sutras from Brahma Sutra. The students repeated them. Pujya Swamiji said that we should keep our mind open to receive what the Sastra teaches. What the Sastra teaches could not be known through any other means of knowledge. We should have the attitude of pramana to Sastra. Then only the Sastra can bless us.

Vedas reveal the sadana to achieve the desirable sadya. It reveal unknown means to achieve known end, known means to achieve unknown end and unknown means to achieve unknown end.

Vedanta reveal siddha vastu vishaya. It is neither sadana nor sadya. It reveals that I am the fullness and happiness I am aspiring for. Jnanam is as true as the vastu. It is vastu tantra. There is no choice.



Brahma Sutra is an analytical book. It analyses Vedanta vakyas. It explains how all the Vedas talk about the same subject matter.

Purvapaksha or other's point of view is explained. Purvapakshi is given complete freedom to argue. We may feel that Vedanta is dismissed. We learn how to have a discussion and dialogue. When Siddanti explains, all the purvapakshi's contentions are dismissed. The impossibility and irrationality of the other contentions are brought to light. Siddanti establishes the correct and rational view of the subject matter. The understanding of the Sastra is analysed. Tatparya is established. The teaching is assimilated.

Sutra literature is a very sophisticated culture. It can be easily committed to

memory. The subject matter is presented through Meta language.

In the first sutras the entire subject matter is discussed. All the later sutras only elaborate what is discussed in the first four sutras. Hence the study of four sutras would give us the complete view of Brahma Sutra.

The class concluded with chanting of Upanishad shanti pada and Dakshinamoorthy stotram. The students eagerly look forward to study the highest Vedantic scripture from the greatest Acharya of their time.

Glory to Sastra! Glory to Guru! Glory to Sishya!

Report by N.Avinashilingam

13 June, 2013 - Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti.

From Pujya Swamiji's *kutir* to the lecture hall the path is strung with dozens of tender coconut leaves, each traditionally cut and folded. The temple entrance is an arch of palm leaves, *malas* and more tender coconut leaves. Rangolis decorate the paths and walkways and even the golf cart used to transport Pujya Swamiji around the ashram is dressed up in banana leaves and *malas*.

A bower of *malas* is hung in sweeping loops across the path leading to the lecture hall, at the entrance of which banana palms stand like sentinels, their fruit and flowers weighing down the branches in a natural namaskar. Inside the lecture hall the scent of jasmine purifies the air from the *malas* strung like the spokes of a bicycle wheel - the hub, of course, being where Pujya Swamiji is seated to take class. The scent soothes the the mind and helps prepare one for the momentous step that is to be taken by the current batch of residential three-year students. Today the study of the Brahma Sutras will begin - the concluding text of the three-year residential course at the ashram.

Why such an elaborate celebration before starting Brahma Sutras? So many *Upanishads* have already been studied, none of which began with such celebration. What makes this special? Is there

something extraordinarily special about the Brahma Sutras that makes it more important than the *Upanishads*? Or is it that it is the final major text of the course? It is neither. Even if it is said that the studying Brahma Sutras assists in the assimilation of the knowledge that has been unfolded in the *Upanishads* studied up till this point, it does not capture why such celebration marks the beginning of the study here in Anaikatti. *Tarhi*, what then?

To study even one *Upanishad*, Pujya Swamiji says, takes a lot of *purva punya*. All the requirements such as human birth, having a desire to know, finding a qualified teacher, indicate that the one studying has great wealth in terms of *punya*. What to say then of the opportunity to study as many *Upanishads* as the residential students have during the last three years or so, and that too, sitting at the feet of Pujya Swamiji? One can only imagine the abundance of *punya* it must take to be blessed in this way. However, having the grace to bring one to the teacher and the study is not the end. If one is to be blessed by the knowledge itself, then *shraddha* is also required. What is *shraddha*? Not faith, much less belief, *shraddha* is the understanding that *shastra* is a *pramana*, a means for knowledge, indeed, the only *pramana* for what one is seeking - freedom from a life of becoming.

How does one gain *shraddha*? Unlike the internal *pramanas*, eyes, ears, etc., *shastra pramana* being external is not going to have the same spontaneous support that our eyes, for instance, enjoy. Instead, the attitude towards *shastra* as a *pramana* will evolve. One's recognizing *shastra's* status as a *pramana* will increase concomitantly with understanding and clarity gained from listening and inquiring into *shastra* as taught by the teacher. The more that understanding and clarity grow, the more *shastra* gains validity for the one studying. This change in attitude towards *shastra pramana* reflects an increase in *shraddha*. Doubts with regards to *shastra's* status of being a *pramana* decrease and one stands behind *shastra pramana* as one stands behind other *pramanas*, such as eyes etc.

In this way, every *Upanishad* that is studied, or more accurately, every Vedanta class, that is attended, has the potential to increase *shraddha* in the *pramana*. The more *shraddha* there is, the more reverence there is for the *pramana*. Thus, the celebration marking the beginning of the study of Brahma Sutras is an expression of reverence. Thus it was that the resident *acarya*, Swami Sakshatkrtanandaji provided the support necessary to arrange for the special events of the day and the decorating, which continued late into the night prior.

By 7:30 in the morning, a special altar had been set up for the students' Brahma Sutra books in front of Lord Daksinamurthy. After a short *puja* the students walked

around the ashram road, each carrying his or her Brahma Sutra book on the head, chanting *Medha Suktam*, *anuvakas* from *Taittiriya Upanishad* and *Sri Rudram*. The priest, Sitaram, led the procession, followed by the Swamis and Swaminis and students. Once the perambulation was complete, the students lined the pathway to the lecture hall, placing handfuls of flowers at the feet of Pujya Swamiji as he entered the hall. After Pujya Swamiji had taken his seat, *pada puja* was performed by Swami Shankarananda before the class began.

Brahma Sutras consists of four chapters with each chapter having four sections. Analysis of the vision of Vedanta is covered in the first four *sutras*, and it is these *sutras* that will be studied over the upcoming months. The vision of Vedanta, *Veda shastra*, and *karma* are thoroughly analyzed through *mimamsa*, inquiry. How it is all connected to *moksha*, how the bondage that one takes to be real is purely *adhyasa*, superimposition, how this can be resolved by knowledge, how that knowledge is gained and what is that knowledge, are all addressed. As Pujya Swamiji pointed out, all that has been studied by the students thus far will be analyzed and assimilated. In the process of assimilation one learns how to deal with topics, and how to discuss the topics that are covered so that no stone is left unturned.

So it was that the study of Brahma Sutras was begun at Anaikatti on 13 June, 2013.

Julie Carpenter

DHARMA, DISCIPLINE, AND DEVOTION: PRIESTHOOD AND THE HINDU TRADITION

Closing Remarks Delivered at the Inaugural Session of the
Second Annual Hindu Priests' Conference, Queens, New York

by Swamini Svatmavidyananda

Leadership in the Hindu Tradition

There is a verse in the *Bhagavad Gītā* that says:

yadyad ācarati śreṣṭhaḥ, tattadevetaro janaḥ |

sa yat pramāṇaṁ kurute, lokastadanuvartate || 3.21

Whatever a prominent person does, that alone other people do.

Whatever trend that person sets as proper, the world of people also follows.

The word "śreṣṭha" means an important person, a person that everyone looks up to, such as a king, a president, or a religious leader. One often becomes a śreṣṭha by occupying a position that is considered to be respectable and prominent, however, merely occupying a position of a śreṣṭha does not ensure that the person is a śreṣṭha. One has to grow into filling the portfolio connected to the position, for which emotional maturity is needed. Really speaking, a true leader does not become a leader by choice. A person often finds him or herself being seen as a śreṣṭha, because others look up to the person as awe-inspiring or worthy of emulation. In the Hindu tradition, we have a two-tier leadership. First, there are the priests, known as *purohitas* who are religious people, who handle rituals and liturgical sacrifices. They are married people, and live in the communities they serve. The word "*purohita*" means the one who is placed at the forefront. They are considered to be śreṣṭha because they are very knowledgeable and their life is committed to worship and devotion. Next, there are the swamis, monastics or renunciants, who take the concept of leadership a step further by renouncing all ties to the world and not needing to lean on anything or anyone except *bhagavān*. Together, the *sannyāsin* and the *purohita* represent the two crucial aspects of the Hindu tradition respectively, namely the vision of oneness (known as *brahmavidyā*), and a committed way of life (*karmayoga*) conducive to assimilating this vision as the truth of oneself. The priests are experts in matters of *ācāra*, the conduct and the practices in the tradition, while the swamis embody *vicāra*, self-enquiry, which is necessary for *mokṣa*, freedom from fear and sorrow. Together, these two tiers of leadership work in tandem to inspire and guide people.

One Who Follows Dharma is a Leader

This two tier leadership underscores a fact that is often overlooked in our tradition --that the means are as important as the ends to be achieved. Therefore, we are not allowed to compromise the means for the sake of the ends. The manner in which one goes

about fulfilling various ambitions is in itself a highly sophisticated pursuit known as dharma. The means in themselves become an end to be accomplished. Dharma is the universal matrix of norms that governs human conduct. It is based on universal expectations of not wanting to be hurt, killed, cheated, defrauded, or deceived. That is why dharma is the first *puruṣārtha*, something that is sought after by all individuals. Everyone wants dharma, either directly or indirectly. You can ask anyone in the world if they wish to be hurt or stolen from, and the answer, universally, is "no." Even those who constantly trespass over the rights and privileges of others somehow still expect everyone else to be considerate towards them. There was a news item that I came across recently. A man broke into a house in a rich neighborhood and stole a huge plasma television. Since it was very heavy, he dragged the television set and hid it in some bushes the backyard. Then, he phoned a friend to come and help him to load the television into the car. The man then went out to the road to wait for the friend. When the friend arrived, both of them went back into the bushes to retrieve the television. To their horror, it was already gone! Someone else made off with it. The original thieves were so distraught that they impulsively dialed 911 to report the "stolen" television. When the police arrived at the scene, they immediately noticed the broken locks on the door of the house, and swiftly arrested the men.

This is the power of dharma, a need that is so fundamental that it cannot be overlooked even by those who habitually violate it. Dharma is therefore something to be accomplished because the tendency to conform to dharma is always under attack from unmanaged desires, *rāga* and *dveṣa*. Some people think that having desire in itself is a problem, but this is not correct. Desire does not trouble anyone so long as one does not come under its spell. The problem, however, is that there is a fine line between managing one's desires, and being managed by them. One can easily cross this line without even sensing it. *Bhagavān* Krishna declares in the *Bhagavad Gītā* that he abides in the form of desire, however, only those desires that do not violate dharma have the presence of *bhagavān*. Desires in the heart must not be given the power to override the means for the sake of gaining the end. Therefore, there is need to let go of those desires that are not in keeping with *sāmānya* dharma, the universal values of *ahimsā*, non injury, and truth.

Because everyone looks up to a leader, the *śreṣṭha* cannot cut corners or trample over the rights and privileges of others. Sometimes we underestimate the power of our actions and forget that the very position we occupy demands both accountability and a high level of transparency. The *Chandogya Upaniṣad* that says that discipline, charity, uprightness, non-injury, and the speaking of truth constitute the real *dakṣiṇā*, spiritual wealth, of the person.

yattapo dānamārjavamahimsā satyavacanamiti tā asya dakṣiṇāḥ 3.17.4

Dharma is its own reward. Although it produces *puṇya* in the long run, it has *drṣṭa-phala*, the immediate result of assuring a life free of strife. Unlike certain theologies that posit dharma as a mandate of God, we say that dharma is the very manifestation of

bhagavān. Wherever there is dharma, there is *bhagavān*. The more one is committed to dharma, the more is the presence of *bhagavān* in one's life. The more the presence of *bhagavān* in one's life, the more secure one feels. In the beginning, one has to follow dharma deliberately, but gradually, by mastering the right methods of pursuing one's goals, one grows into a person who is incapable of flouting dharma. That is when one becomes a *śreṣṭha*, an example to be emulated.

Discipline is Dharma in Action

Dharma is not a static entity. Since it is based on the *dharmin*, on being enacted by people gifted with free will, it requires constant interpretation and reinterpretation according to place, time, and intentionality. There is, for example, a big difference in the intentions of a knife-wielding attacker, and a scalpel-wielding doctor, performing a surgery. Technically, both cause harm, but in the case of the surgeon, it is with the intention to preserve, rather than destroy, life. This is the dynamic facet of dharma, known as *viśeṣa* dharma. *Viśeṣa* dharma requires the cultivation of alertness in one's life, and the readiness to face new challenges without compromising *sāmānya* dharma. For example, circumstances such as immigration to Western countries, living and serving in a land distant from one's own, can create special challenges in conforming to dharma.

A remarkable feature of ancient Indian culture was the total lack of competition. It was a society that was almost entirely devoted to the ultimate pursuit of discovering oneself as wholly contented and limitless. Therefore, the social infrastructure was one of zero competition, and supported this goal by ensuring that each person would have a ready-made livelihood, and the consequent leisure to discover themselves. As a result of this legacy, even today, every priest is a son of a priest and marries the daughter of a priest. Coming from this kind of a spiritual culture of non-competition, we are ill-equipped to survive in the modern atmosphere of the mad race to get ahead at all costs. Pressure to assimilate, pressure to get ahead in society, pressure to become someone famous, the pressure to amass great amounts of wealth create skewed priorities that inevitably lead to inner conflict and depression. By drawing upon the timeless tenets of the Vedas, we have to forge a new covenant that will empower us, and equip us to face the challenges without succumbing to such pressures. Recognizing the needs of the time, and rising to meet them with cheerfulness and integrity is the essence of leadership.

Sāmānya and *viśeṣa* dharma are the general and specific manifestations of dharma at the macrocosmic level. *Svadharmā*, the commitment to one's duty, signifies the way in which dharma is to be enacted at the microcosmic level of one's daily existence. This is perhaps the crucial aspect of being a *śreṣṭha* --setting an example to others in the day-to-day. Generally, the people are not as inspired by lofty ideas or heavy-duty philosophical discourses as they are by simply seeing how one lives in the every day. Even Arjuna, after receiving the knowledge that the self is free of all afflictions and is limitlessly whole, was curious to know about the manner in which the person who

abides this knowledge leads his or her daily life. He asks *Bhagavān* Krishna:

sthitāḥ prajñasya kā bhāṣā? Sthitadhīḥ kim prabhāṣeta? kimāsīta? vrajeta kim?
How is the person of firm wisdom? How does such a person speak, sit, or walk?

Walking one's talk is *svadharma*. Following *svadharma* is not easy, as it demands great self-discipline and perseverance in the performance of prescribed duties. The grass always appears greener elsewhere and, purely based on the feeling that one is missing out on something big, one is often tempted to stray into unfamiliar pastures. Knowing this, the *śāstra* has prescribed a comprehensive curriculum of duties for each person to follow based on their occupation and, *āśrama*, station in life. Ideally, each person plays their part in the cosmic flow, thereby ensuring the relative security and well-being of all. Certain things have to be done daily; certain others things have to be done occasionally, but actions which go against *sāmānya* dharma must never be done at all. Following this timetable protects one from trap of *rāga-dveṣa*, while also ensuring steady progress towards self-knowledge that frees one from *saṁsāra* --a life of endless striving and disenchantment.

In keeping with the view that everything is sacred because it is pervaded by *Īśvara*, the Hindu tradition does not make an iota of a difference between the so-called sacred and secular duties. All actions --not merely those duties confined to ritual and worship-- are considered sacred. The contemporary culture in the United States and other western countries is drastically different from this ancient view. I have repeatedly heard people describing their day mindlessly, and it is no wonder alienation from oneself and disconnection from the whole appear to be common cultural ailments. When I ask people in this country about their day, the typical answers given contain a litany of violent metaphors. For example, they "throw off the covers" in the morning, and "jump into the shower." After this, they "grab a bite to eat," even as they "hit the road." At the office, they "crunch some data," before "beating the traffic" on the way back. Once home, no one cooks. They just "nuke something from the fridge," and then, finally, "crash" at the end of the day! In this scheme of things, there is no leisure to just enjoy one's being, or to revel in the creative inspiration behind one's actions. By contrast, in our tradition, starting with waking up in the morning, everything for the Hindu is a sacred act. All actions, even mundane ones, such as bathing, dressing, or eating are acts of prayer performed for the sake of the indweller, the *bhagavān* that abides in all. In this area, the *purohita* by his very being serves as an invaluable role model. By simply leading his life in accordance to the teaching of the *śāstra*, he can offer a powerful alternative to the disconnected and stressful life to which one can succumb while living in the USA and other western countries.

Svadharma is Discovering the Devotee Within

In stark contrast to the contemporary capitalist culture, where fulfilling one's desires is

considered to be the hallmark of success in one's life, the *Bhagavad Gītā* redefines success as the prayerful performance of every action, and the joyful acceptance of the result thereof. Although we do possess one of the most sophisticated bodies of liturgical worship and prayers, for the sake of our own self-growth, we are encouraged to look upon all our actions as worship of *Īśvara*:

yataḥ pravṛttirbhūtānāṃ yena sarvamidam tatam

***svakarmanā tamabhyarcya siddhiṃ vindati mānavaḥ* 18.46**

worshipping with one's own actions, the source of all beings,

by whom everything is pervaded, the human being accomplishes success.

Each action that is performed is viewed as *arcanā*, a flower placed reverentially at the feet of the Lord. Just as all the items used in worship are purified by the sprinkling of *mantra*-water, so too all our actions have to be sanctified by infusing them with a joyous and mindful attitude. Just as we cannot offer yesterday's leftovers in today's worship, or skip certain steps of the worship because we happen to be in a hurry, so too, when action itself is worship, there is no room for procrastination or carelessness in its performance. Committing to a life of worshipful action insulates one from the inner enemies of *rāga* and *dveṣa*. The performance of *svadharma* with a spirit of devotion and surrender transforms one into a devotee, into a prayerful person. There is a vast difference between person who prays and a prayerful person. For the former, prayer is one among many discrete acts; for the latter, devotion and prayerfulness are attitudes which permeate all actions.

Like *viśeṣa* dharma, the performance of *svadharma* can also vary depending upon the situations in which one finds oneself. One is neither born with an instruction booklet of what one has to do, nor does one have the freedom to always do only what one likes. Therefore, accomplishing *svadharma* means that one eventually grows into liking all that one has to do. The portfolio of the *purohitas* in India is very different than those living in North America. Here, it would appear, that one has more duties --one is not just a performer of rituals, but is the very pillar of the community, to whom many look up to for guidance and inspiration. The *purohitas* find that a lot more than just worship is expected of them. They are suddenly, among other things, counselors, guides, interpreters of rituals, teachers of Hinduism, speakers, interfaith ministers, and inspirers of youth. Faced with this situation, one has the choice to either feel victimized and burdened by the demands of the time, or to embrace the God-given opportunity to grow and do one's best. The latter course of action alone benefits not only the entire community of people, where the *purohita* resides, but also blesses the *purohita* by allowing him to evolve spiritually. It is a win-win situation that facilitates one's growth into a *śreṣṭha*. To grow into a person committed to dharma requires help from many sources. If language and social interaction skills are required for the performance of *svadharma*, one has to acquire them. Further, to overcome internal obstacles, such as alienation or discouragement, one has to take recourse to gatherings such as this, where we can come together and help one another in a spirit of sharing and networking.

The primary aspect of the *purohita's* *svadharma* is to model being a devotee. Who is a devotee? The witness who plays many roles in life effortlessly, the core person, the essential person, is the devotee. The individual who is mindful of his or her connection to the whole, to *Īśvara*, is the devotee. Worship is an act that highlights this connection, where the helpless individual (*jīva*) invokes the total (*Īśvara*) in a spirit of surrender. When the limited surrenders at the altar that is limitless, the limited resolves, and all that remains is the limitless *Īśvara*. The awareness of one's essential identity as the devotee keeps one's connection to the whole at the forefront, thereby erasing alienation and insecurity. If one is mindful of the primary connection to *Īśvara* as a devotee, then the performance of other roles becomes easy. The devotee is the one who performs the role of son or daughter, spouse, friend, father or mother. All roles "roll" into the devotee, and the devotee further resolves into the object of devotion, which is none other than *Īśvara*, the subject, the truth of oneself.

Discovering the devotee within oneself is indeed the master key to spiritual growth, to truly being a *śreṣṭha*. For most people this takes a lot of work, as the complex interlays of various roles tend to obfuscate the core identity of the devotee within. In this regard, I find that the *purohitas* are extremely blessed, because here alone lies a total identity between what one does and what one is. One's job is one's very being, and one is in the covetable position to reflect the devotee that one seeks to invoke within oneself. If I were asked to spell out the primary role of the priests, I would say that it is to invoke the devotee in oneself and also model it for others. Only when the devotee is present in the priest, as the priest, can there be worship. The essence of priesthood is devotion, and the priest is essentially a devotee. It is extremely important to not lose sight of this basic person, the devotee. The temple attendee is a devotee, the temple executive is also a devotee, and the priest, of course, is a devotee. All are devoted to *Īśvara*. The focus of every temple is to help one develop and live this life of devotion, and to provide a conducive refuge for each person to invoke the devotee within himself or herself.

Through the lived practice of dharma, discipline and devotion, one learns to not be affected by the challenges that one faces in life. This is Hinduism in 3 D! This is how one grows to be a *śreṣṭha*. When one occupies a prominent position, there is no other option than to grow to fill the post with grace and integrity. The sacrifice that it takes to do this is not in vain, as it helps one to become an emotionally stable and contented person, secure in the knowledge of one's connection to the whole. When we gather our resources, and come together in a spirit of sharing, even the most difficult tasks can be mastered with ease. Therefore I am very confident that the Hindu priests of North America gathered here for the second time will accomplish great things together. I am happy to see that the numbers have more than doubled since the last meet. I wish this gathering every success. I congratulate the organizers and the volunteers for their dedicated effort in putting this conference together, and pray that the discussions generated here will go a long way in the sustenance and dissemination of *sanātana* dharma in North America. Thank you. *Om tat sat*.

Dance Arangetram of Ms. Deepa Ramanathan

Chennai on June 01,2013

Pujya Sri Swamiji graced the occasion of bharatanaatyam arangetram of Ms. Deepa, daughter of Sri Ramanathan at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan auditorium, Chennai on June 1, 2013.

Pujya Sri Swamiji made the day for Deepa, Deepa's bharatanaatyam teacher Dr. Srithika Kasturirangan, her teacher Dr. Ambika Kameshwar and Chief Guest Smt. Revathi Ramachandran, Deepa's parents, the orchestra and all who had gathered on the occasion.

The uniqueness of the event was for more than two and half hours, Pujya Sri was almost conducting the proceedings. Pujya Sri, Smt. Revathi Ramachandran, Smt. Ambika Kameshwar, Dr. Srithika, the orchestra and Deepa were a closed circle. As Deepa later mentioned, she was constantly aware of Pujya Sri's revered presence through the programme; her guru, Dr. Srithika, not for one moment, let Deepa out of her gaze; Smt. Revathi Ramachandran focused on Deepa's movements. Dr. Ambika was oscillating her attention between her disciple Dr. Srithika and her student, Deepa. Smt. Preeti Mahesh and the orchestra helped the stalwarts remain in the zone. Smt. Sheela



Balaji was watching from close quarters. Rest of the audience remained enthralled.

Pujya Sri in his anugraha bhaashanam was eloquent in his praise of Deepa's performance, her guru's efforts, and the parents' support, and more than anything Deepa's enthusiasm for the art form despite contemporary pressures of education and other distractions in today's society. He had generous appreciation for Deepa's portrayal of varnam and expressed awe at her foot



movements. Pujya Sri had special words of appreciation for Smt. Preety Mahesh, the vocalist and the orchestra for the excellent harmony which helped Deepa and Dr. Srithika give such an excellent performance of style and substance. Pujya Sri said it all when he mentioned that a student could only be as good as her teacher. Dr. Srithika, as humble as she can be, was very graceful in her acceptance of Pujya Sri's words of praise.

Smt. Revathi Ramachandran gave a very detailed account of Deepa's performance with minute observations on her foot movements, mobile face, apt portrayal of emotions, and her confident stage presence. In fact Pujya Sri mentioned that he exchanged notes with Smt. Revathi Ramachandran on Deepa's performance.

Deepa is blessed to have such an enthusiastic and keen observer as the chief guest for the occasion.

Dr. Ambika Kameshwar had great words of appreciation for Dr. Srithika as well as Deepa. She was in her elements when she elaborated on how an arangetram was as good an experience as child birth for the naatya guru. She literally showered her appreciation on both Dr. Srithika and Deepa. Both Deepa and Dr. Srithika would have had their heart's fill from the evening by the special appreciation of Dr. Ambika.

Pujya Sri blessed all the artists of the evening. He magnanimously blessed Deepa with a shawl. All who had gathered paid their respects to him. Deepa and all her respected teachers would have given Pujya Sri the feeling that our tradition was in the safe hands of these dedicated protagonists of the art form of Bharatanatyam and in this great journey of preserving our Dharma through art and culture.

For the rest of the audience, it was simply a great evening which kept everyone spellbound in the web of dance, beautiful choreography, devotional content, rasa, and gracefully portrayed movements.

Deepa, in her vote of thanks, mentioned that this dance form had developed her devotion for the form and content through the numerous sessions of practice, culminating on the day of her arangetram and how Pujya Sri's words had always inspired her. She thanked one and all for making the day a memorable one for her. She was overwhelmed with emotion when she thanked her guru, Dr. Srithika.



Hindu Mandir Executives' Conference (HMEC)

2ND HINDU MANDIR PRIESTS' CONFERENCE-NY.

May 31 – June 1, 2013

Shri Surya Narayan Mandir at 92-17 172nd Street, Jamaica, NY 11433.

www.ShriSuryaNarayanMandir.org

Media Statement

The 2nd Hindu Mandir Priests' Conference concluded today at the Shri Surya Narayan Mandir at 92-17 172nd Street, Jamaica, NY 11433, amidst joyful expressions of congratulations and handshakes for a highly successful event. "It was a highly informative two days", was the general refrain.

Following the success of the 1st Priests' Conference held in Pittsburgh, PA last year, the Organizing committee which was comprised of seasoned HMEC sevaks and members of the local Queens, NY Hindu community, justifiably felt a strong sense of accomplishment by Saturday evening. The Conference was hosted by the Shri Surya Narayan Mandir, in collaboration with the Bhavaanee Maa Mandir, the New York Sanatana Mandir and the United Community Mandir.

The Inaugural Session of the Conference got underway on the evening of Friday May 31 at 7:00 pm. In attendance were more than 130 Hindu devotees, Pandits and Swamis. First, the more than 50 Priests in attendance joined in chanting the Ganesha Atharvashirsha, and then Pandit Ram Hardowar, the Spiritual Leader of the Shri Surya Narayan Mandir extended a warm welcome to all the participants.

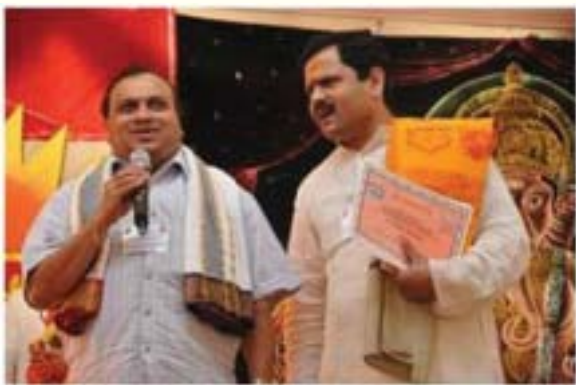
The stage was now set for the presentations by the erudite speakers who followed. As the audience listened in rapt attention, the speakers made very thoughtful

presentations that covered the challenges facing Priests in the community by Amrutur Srinivasan, the work of the USA Pandits' Parishad in Guyana and here in the USA by Pandit Parasram, and Swamini Svatmavidyananda's talk on Devotion, Dharma, Prayer and the Priesthood. The Arya Spiritual Center's Dharmacharya Pandit Ramlall also spoke about the challenges facing the Hindu in hostile societies.



Saturday started at 6:00 am with yoga, pranayama and devotional singing by young Hindus of the community. After a mouthwatering breakfast served up by the host Mandir, it was back to the serious business at hand. There followed six business sessions ably emceed by youthful Sarika Persaud, assisted by rotating moderators who introduced the various speakers.

The sessions covered topics such as Priests' Role: Issues & Concerns; Community's issues & Concerns: Devotees' & Executives' Inputs; Sharing resources, the GOTO Group; and Education & Training. The appreciative



audience was treated to some very scholarly and passionate presentations covering issues as varied as the role of Priests and their assimilation in the North American society to Hindu Chaplaincy in the University setting, and continuing education and skill development strategies.

In the third session dealing with Community's issues and concerns, young Aneesh Bairavasundaram stole everyone's hearts with a polished presentation of "My story: Growing up in a Priest's family". Aneesh spoke about the expectations of parents for young Hindus "to blindly follow rituals" laid down by their elders, and that in the "North American context, blind faith is looked down on". As this young man walked away from the podium, he was treated to loud and prolonged applause for the simple and articulate manner in which he shared his story.

One outstanding feature of this conference was the number of youthful Hindus who made presentations. In addition to Aneesh, there was also Austin Ayer who spoke about the training available at universities in the Maharishi Organization, Devi Mehotra who spoke about the Hindu Students Council at Yale University, and Dr. Anand Ramnarine, who called for a "national Hindu Voice, as a means of solidifying our Hindu identity."

There were lively Q&A segments after some sessions, which demonstrated that the members of the audience shared strong concern about the topics and presentations, and confirmed the need for this Conference to be organized on a regular basis. The scholarly presentations should find a place on the desk of every serious Hindu Leader. They would prove to be very valuable in devising strategies to resolve difficulties faced by our priests and the devotees they serve.



After all the presentations, the participants unanimously approved 2 resolutions for action:

Recognizing the need to enhance communication among priests in North America with the sole object of building a Dharmic Bridge between priests and the community they serve, resolves to establish a Pandit Sabha, a communication network.

That the Conference Committee resolves to resolve to develop a Priests Training Workshop Model that includes development of a Guide Book.

At the close, Dharmacharya Rishi B. Misir of the Federation of Hindu Mandirs, Inc. and the USA Pandits' Parishad thanked the Conference Committee for its vision and dedication to solving Hindu issues by organizing the event.

It was a conference with all of the ingredients that one could hope for. Brilliant and well received presentations were made by Swamis, Pandits, Mandir Executives, and our Youths, all sharing their perspective on every conceivable issue facing the Hindus

in North America. Yes, it was a highly successful 2nd Hindu Mandir Priests' Conference!

HMEC is an initiative of World Hindu Council of America (VHPA). Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) of America (VHPA), founded in 1970 and incorporated in the state of New York in 1974, is an independent, nonprofit, tax-exempt and volunteer-based charitable organization serving the needs of Hindu community in USA. It aims to build a dynamic and vibrant Hindu society rooted in the eternal values of Dharma and inspired by the lofty ideal of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, i.e. the entire creation is one family.



Kutty Chandra

The unexpected illness and demise of Chandra gave all of us a shock that we have no way to absorb. The sadness also is not resolvable. But she has also left behind a valuable example in her life of intelligent dedication to what she was committed. The vision of Vedanta was her commitment. And making it available for all was equally important in her life. She had helped Smt. Ranganayaki Amma to set up the publication centre, and she has been heading the editorial team under the guidance of Sheelaji for 4 years. Under her leadership, a number of books, including the new edition of the Gita Home Study programme in nine volumes came out with brilliant set up and format.

I have always admired her versatility and *sraddha*. A person of that caliber and stature does not literally leave us. Chandra will always be with us.

"Dayananda"

"This Year's trip to North East"



Like in the previous years, this year also with Pujya Swamiji's blessings and permission I have visited Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. It was a trip that I will not forget in my life time.

On 9th of May, 2013 I reached Guwhati and on 10th from there I went to Meghalaya. On 13th afternoon, along with Mr. Kripa Prasad Singh(All India Vice President of Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram) I reached Agartala, Tripura. On 14th we started our journey

towards Maa Tripureswarii Mandir in a place called Udaypur. After having wonderful Darshanam and receiving her Blessings we started to Kumarghat (where Pujya Swamiji's devotee Smt. Dr. Indu Krishnan and her family friends have donated a Hostel Building to Vanavasii Kalyan Ashram). The hostel has been functioning since 2011 and 40 tribal girls stay there. Next day we went to Kanchanpur and from there to Riyong-Refugee-Camp, in place called Ashapada

and Narsingpada in Tripura-Mizoram-Border.

In Ashapada, the Riyong tribes accorded us a very warm welcome in a traditional way. We met hundreds of people. As I have written in my last year's report, more than 45,000 people are living in these two refugee-camps for the past 16 years. Last year we brought 10 boys and 15 girls from there to Aim for Seva Hostels in MP. All the student's parents and relatives expressed their desire to meet me separately. **I am extremely happy to share with you that the parents have expressed their gratitude and happiness to Aim for Seva for taking care of and educating their children very nicely and without their having to take care of any expense.** They have expressed their gratitude and Pranams to Pujya Swamiji for starting Aim for Seva organization. Many of them have asked me to take their other children also to Aim for Seva Hostels. *" We do not know whether we will go back to our homes in Mizoram or not. We are afraid our children will grow up without any education. Here we do not have school facility. Schools run by missionaries are there in this place but we have to pay Rs500 per student per month and we can't afford that; plus they force us to come to their prayers and criticize our style of living. We don't want to give up our culture and our children tell us that in Aim for Seva, all the people love us, validate our culture and encourage us for following our culture. Our children tell us over phone that our Swamiji and other people keep asking us about our culture and family members. No body has done this for us since last 16 years, not even our*



Government. Hence we request you to take more students from our camps”.

On the 15th we moved from Kanchanpur to Mizoram side. This trip was an eye-opener for us. From Kanchanpur(NorthTripura) to Rajiv Nagar (Mizoram) the road is NH 44 and the distance is 150km. We started from Kanchanpur at 9am in the morning and reached Rajiv Nagar at 6pm. There is no road at all and it is a total hilly area, called Jampui Hills. On the way we crossed Hmunpui, Vangmun, Behliang Chhip, Banglabari, Thangsang, Sabual, Phuldeengsei, Kawnoui and Kawnpui North(this is the last villge of Tripura). Here our car was stopped by Tripura police and then by Mizoram Police. We had to go through like immigration formalities(Even though we had taken permission to go to Mizoram 15 days before) with both Tripura and Mizoram police before going to Rajiv Nagar.

Before reaching Rajiv Nagar we had to cross Khantlang, Amsurimukh and Kild. As we entered Rajiv Nagar, the village Head(Mukhiya) told us that it was not the right time for us to visit Mizoram as these days a lot of things were happening in that area. When I asked him further, he said *“Since last 15 days 5 people have been kidnapped from these 4 villages and 2 have been killed. One person’s dead body is still in this village only. Yesterday police were suppose to come here to do the formalities but so far they have not come. Without them completing the formalities we can’t do the cremation also. Suppose we do it and they come to know, all of us will be behind bars. Though that person is my*

relative, we can’t even touch the dead body”.

It was very late by then and they took us to a Buddhist temple (It is on top of the hill) and asked us to spend the night there and left us, saying they would meet us the next morning.



In Mizoram three tribes live- the Mizu, Riyong and Chakma. Among them Mizus are 85%, Riyongs are 6 % and Chakmas are 9%. Mizus are 100% converted into Christianity; Riyongs are 40% Hindus and 60% converted Christians and Chakmas, being very strong Buddhists are given a tough time because they do not want to be converted into Christians.

We stayed overnight at the Buddhist temple which is made of bamboos. It rained heavily the whole night. The Buddhist monk at the temple offered us rice and some unknown vegetables. We took it and then a few people came to meet us from the village. I remember their names- Gyana Ranjan Chakma, Dhiman Chakma, Jnanandu Chakma, Bishrut Chakma, Kumari Khema Chakma and Smt.Kanika Chakma. There was no electricity; so they brought a few candles.

Mr.Gyana Ranjan Chakma knew a little Hindi, so I set with him and started asking about their life there, how many people were there in the village? How do you manage your livelihood? Who are the people live in this village.. etc. He told that in Rajiv Nagar village and in nearby 15 villages only Chakma people lived. (They were a total of 25,000 people in that part of Mizoram.) After that, in a few villages the Riyong people and some Mizu people lived. The Riyong and Chakma lived only in hilly area and Mizus lived in the other part of Mizoram.

I then asked him about the 1997 incident, when there was tension between Riyongs tribes and Mijus tribes which later turned into a big fight and Riyongs had run away

to Tripura. Mr. Gyana Ranjan Chakma told me the whole story. –

There was a Forest Guard in that area and he was from Mizu Tribe. One day he showed a very beautiful girl in one village. She belonged to the Riyong tribe. He had kidnapped the girl and taken her to his office. After few days he brought her to that village and told the villagers that she was his wife. The Riyong community accepted it and kept quiet as they had no choice. They were scared and suppressed by Mizus. They were tortured by them. Then after some time that Forest Guard started giving her more and more torture and started looking towards other girls also. He had started openly telling that I will have few more girls from your community, what will you people do and touched one more girl, but there were many Riyong people, so he couldn't take her on that day. That same night some of the Riyong community youth came together and went to forest office and killed that Guard. That was the reason the Mizu Community got violent and killed many people; many villages were put on fire, many girls were raped and killed; many Riyong village leaders were kidnapped and latter on killed, their heads, hands and legs being cut. It went on for few days, even then no police force came to stop it. So the remaining Riyong Community people ran away towards the Tripura border and the Tripura Government gave them shelter.

That was 1997 and since then these people are living there as a Refugee Camp. Those days Union Home Minister L.K.Adwaniji went there and assured them that within few days they will be taken back to their

places and given their Land and houses but so far nothing has happened. After that Mr.Shivaraj Patil, Mr.P Chidambaram had been there, but they couldn't help them too. (Few days before in Chip Ministers meeting in Delhi Mr. Shushil Kumar Shindhe, Home Minister of India has said one sentence about it- Tripura and Mizoram have some problem and that has to be shoaled by them only, we(Gov. of India) can not interfere in it. It is clear that Gov.of India dose not want to interfere, because then all Mizus will not be happy).

Then I have asked Mr.Gyan Ranjan Chakma- How do you people (Chakmas) manage to be here? There is no Government support and no safety for you people also? He said *"We do not want to leave our home-land. Though they (Mizu-People) say that we(Chakmas) are not natives and are foreigners, how is that possible? Because now also we can see the old monuments of Chakamas and in Bangladesh and here also we can see the Forts of Chakama Kings. The Mizoram Government and Mizus are giving us hard time. Every day the police and other people are torturing and harassing us. You have seen that since last two days one dead*

body is lying in our village, but no police man has come to our village and suppose without post-mortem we do the cremation then the police will come here and take at least 10 people from this village and put case on their name. Each and every week at least one or two people are killed and kidnapped; no action is taken by Government of Mizoram neither by Government of India. Whatever happens, we will not give-up home land, we will fight against them and we are asking Riyong people also, just come together, we will fight for our rights, don't run away."

Next day morning around 50 Chakma people from Rajiv Nager and neighboring villages came to meet us and expressed their gratitude for coming all the way to see them and requested us to come again. They have put a special request to Aim for Seva and specially to Pujya Swamiji - **"Please take our children to Aim for Seva Hostels"**. These people have seen Pujya Swamiji in Gauhati in 2006 when Pujya Swamiji was the Chief Guest of the All India Tribal meet .

Swami Aishwaryananda Saraswati
Indore, M.P.

"See life objectively, just as it is, so that you will be able to make use of the time that is available in your hands right now. Available time is precious time. Make use of it - consciously, alertly. Consciously use your time for your activities and pursuits. Work. Play. Sleep. Eating, relaxing, walking, make use of time consciously and then you won't find one day that time has passed over you and suddenly you are old. If you make use of time alertly, consciously, you are a Swami of time, a master of time"

.....Dayananda



Om

**Three-month
Residential Course
by
Arsha Vidya Vikas Kendra
Bhubaneswar**

With the permission and blessings of Puja Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Arsha Vidya Vikas Kendra, Bhubaneswar, announces a short Three-month Residential Course on Vedanta, Sanskrit, Chanting, and Indian Culture (exposure to Temple Architecture, Classical Dance and Music) commencing from October 6th, 2013 (open-ended).

The course will be conducted, by Swamini Atmaprajananda Saraswati, student-disciple of Puja Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati.

Brahmacaris/Brahmacarinis familiar with the traditional Gurukula teaching parampara may apply to,

Swamini Atmaprajananda Saraswati

Founder Acarya
Arsha Vidya VikasKendra
A 1/1 Palaspalli
Bhubaneswar – 751 020
ODISHA
atmaprajna@gmail.com



providing requisite details.
One may also see the following,
for various activities of the centre.

www.arshavidya.net
atmaprajanandasaraswati.blogspot.com
You Tube - Atmaprajananda saraswati

The Kendra will provide facilities that are possible.



ARSHA VIDYA GURUKULAM (SRUTI SEVA TRUST)

ANAIKATTI, COIMBATORE - 641 108

Phones: (0422) 2657 001 / 2657 170

E-mail: office@arshavidya.in - website: www.arshavidya.in

Gurupūrṇimā Pūjā

We cordially invite you to attend the Gurupūrṇimā Pūjā to be held at the Gurukulam on Monday, July 23, 2013.

This year we are indeed blessed that Pūjya Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati is present at the Gurukulam on that day. We welcome you to participate in the Guru Pūjā and receive Guru's blessings.

The Programme for the day will be as follows.

Guru Pūjā	10-15 AM
Pūjya Sri Swāmiji's Anugraha Bhāshanam	11-00 AM
Mahā Prasādam	12-30 PM

P.S. Please send your puja offering by way of DD for Rs.251/- (for cheques add Rs.50/- as bank charges) to reach us on or before **20.07.2013**. Use the form given below. Please make your Cheque or DD payable to **Sruti Seva Trust**, Coimbatore.

----- ✂ ----- ✂ -----

PUJA OFFERING

Enclosed is my Offering for the GURU PŪJĀ on 22-07-2013.

Name (in Block Letters) Nakshatra Gotra

- | | | |
|---------|---|----------|
| 1. | } | Rs.251/- |
| 2. | | |
| 3. | } | Rs.251/- |
| 4. | | |

My Address (IN BLOCK LETTERS).....

Phone.....Mobile.....E-mail.....

Cheque/DD No.....Bank.....Date.....

Annual spiritual camp of Arsha Vidya Tirtha, Jaipur

The Annual Arsha Vidya Tirtha, Jaipur spiritual camp was held at Rishikesh Ashrama from June 2-8, 2013 under the auspices of Swami Brahmaparananda Saraswatiji. About 100 devotees from Jaipur, Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Meerut, Ghaziabad, 20 AVT Jaipur Chhatralayam children, some of their parents, Sandhya Gurukulam caretakers from villages of Rajasthan - Makdadev, Nainbara, Manas, participated. The Ashrama on the bank of Ganges added to the grandeur of the environment.

The day commenced at 5.15 a.m. with Rudrabhishekam in the temple. AVT children chanted the Rudram rhythmically and in a melodious voice. It was followed by the dhyanam with *Guru Stotram* conducted by Swamiji. The devotees' went into a transcendental mode with this knowledge of meditation.

Then wisdom from the Third Adhyayam — **Karma Yoga - The Eternal Duties of Human Being**—from Srimad Bhagwad Gita (*all evils like fear and delusion which are responsible for throwing the jiva in to the whirl-pool of birth and death, are offshoots of desire for transitory materials and luxuries. Therefore, O men, abandoning this morbid desire, always work for the welfare of the world. By this way your efforts will be beneficially joyful to all*) and comprehension of Stotrams, which Swamiji elaborated for us in a simplified but explicit manner charged us all up!

Lord Krishna has given us the precious treasure to ponder on:

*na hi kashchit kshanamapi jaatu
tishthatyakarmakrit*

*kaaryate hyavashah karma sarvah
prakritjair gunaih || 3.5 ||*

Swamiji explained that one cannot remain without engaging in activity at any time, even for a moment; certainly all living entities are helplessly compelled to action by the qualities

endowed by material nature!

Afternoons were kept reserved for games and Ganga snanam for all the children. One class in the evening by *Swamiji on Bhaja Govindam*, was again mesmerizing. After the evening aarti in the temple, the Ganga aarti was Divinely, with Chhatralayam children added to the beauty of it all by the melodious Ganga stotram.

Night Satsang (8.30-10:00 p.m.) saw a fiesta of Bhajans. The Chhatralayam children were the main performers, *Gulab being our lead singer with Divine melodious voice accompanied by the little ones with Devesh on Tabla, Sukhlal on Dholak!* Other devotees' also participated freely. It was great to see so much of talent amongst the youngsters. The highlight of the cultural week was — a dramatization by children on *Krishna-Arjuna samvada from 2nd Adhyaya of Srimad Bhagwad Gita* which simply was breathtaking. Pallavi, MBBS student from Ajmer got huge applause for her beautiful efforts. *Rachnaji, Rajasthan Coordinator, Sri Swami Vivekananda Kendra* was appreciated by Swamiji and devotees' for her beautiful efforts to train our children to be active through games, yoga and skit and children performed well under her able guidance.

During night satsang, devotees' were also blessed to have *Swami Satprakashananda Saraswati* from Kuala Lumpur. He blessed the children and talked about the uniqueness of human birth! *Swami Sivatmananda Saraswati*, Heading a sub-Math of Sringeri in Karnataka. Interestingly in 1990's, He as a Brahmachari had learnt all the chantings from our Swamiji. He appreciated Swamiji for all the efforts. He beautifully explained the importance and meaning of *Yagnopaveetadhaaram Brahmopadesham* and mentioned that *after the ceremony, the boy is declared as "Dwijan" or "twice born"*. *Swamiji from Rishikesh* explained the



importance of staying in Gurukulam. *Swami Shuddhanandaji*, was specially felicitated by Swamiji and devotees' for his tireless efforts and dedication for years taking care of Rishikesh Ashrama and serving Pujya Sri Swamiji! *Swami Shuddhanandaji, as a token of appreciation and blessings to our Chhatralayam children, gave veshti and angavastram.*

One of the Devotee's son had **Yagnopaveetadhaaranam** (the sacred thread consists of three strands signifying Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva. It also represents, Jnana, Karma, Bhakti. Maonji, a gridle made out of Munja grass is bed around the waist of the child to protect his purity and to keep evils away) and **Brahmopadeshm** (The Gayathri Mantra is a Supreme Mantra and protects those who recite it. The boy's father becomes his Guru and whispers into his ears) by Sri Swamiji. *Isn't he fortunate to have had this auspicious occasion of Upanayanam Brahmopadeshm in the Divine Ghat in Swamiji's presence?*

There was *Sadhu Bhandara* almost every other day. Devotees' were very contented that by this way they contribute towards Ashram.

Swamiji helped devotees' do **elaborate pooja of Ma Ganga** on Saturday. It was very special for all of us to sit together in the Ghat and observe abhishekam (with all dravyams) and alankaram (saree, kumkumam, kaajal, bangles, garland, mehandi etc) to our Divine Mother! Adi Guru Shankaracharya's **Ganga Stotram**, the evergreen delight, even as Herself, Meditation upon and salutations to the Mother, as also the Anga-pooja and the 108 names were chanted. The Mother has been purifying mankind ever since Bhageeratha brought her

down, and has been sung, loved and praised by greatest of men then on.

This day was also auspicious as some of our women devotees' observed **Savitri vrata** (upavasa for the welfare of their husbands) and did early morning pooja to vata vriksha with chanting *Om Namo Bhagawate Vasudevaya*. It was interesting to see them wear ornaments made with the leaves of the tree!

In spite of the hectic busy schedule, Swamiji took out time and arranged for us to visit —Vasishtha Gufa. Devotees' really enjoyed.

The camp was indeed an enthralling experience with *Ganga ki Karuna* —with the mesmerizing and serene flowing eternally by the Ghaat of our Ashrama and *Karuna ki Ganga flowing from Swamiji in the form of Srimad Bhagawad Gita made the mind absolutely thoughtless*. Even the "timetable" sank within no time! It was amazing to see so many young children along with their parents and grandparents started their vacation in such a holistic atmosphere.

All the devotees' insisted Swamiji to fix date for the next year camp, as all felt very fortunate to have *Swami Brahmaparanandaji as our Guru, guiding us and taking pains to make sure that everyone takes the Divine Gift along with them!* We are eagerly awaiting for June 7th, 2014, when Swamiji will be holding the next camp. *Ganga Ma is in our heart - as the Purifier, *\$? - *\$5(@ ! One desires to see Her again and yet again, and sit on Her lap - unique Mother to all!*

With Swamiji's KARUNA, we all have returned home with definitely more balanced, mentally as well as physically!

Arsha Vidya Newsletter

Annual Subscription: Rs.180/-

Published by V. Sivaprasad

Trustee, Sruti Seva Trust, Anaikatti, Coimbatore 641108

Edited by S. Srinivasan - 0422-2657001

Printed by B. Rajkumar, Rasi Graphics Pvt. Ltd.,

40 Peters Road, Madras 600014. Ph. 28132790, 28131232



Date of Publication : 28th of every month

RNI NO: TNENG/2000/2250
REGISTERED REGN. NO. TN / CH/(C) / 175 / 12 - 14
LICENSED TO POST WITHOUT PRE-PAYMENT OF
POSTAGE WPP NO. TN/PMG (CCR) WPP-286 / 2012-2014

