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This is the thirty fourth part of the serial article, continuation from March 2024 newsletter.

Identity of the self and brahman

The following *mantra* describes the self as distinct from the phenomenal world:

त्रिषु धामसु यद्भोग्यं भोक्ता भोगश्च यद्भवेत् ।

तेयो विलक्षणः साक्षी चिन्मात्रोऽहं सदाशिवः ॥ १८ ॥

triṣu dhāmasu yadbhogyam bhoktā bhogaśca yadbhavet

tebhyo vilakṣaṇaḥ sākṣī cinmātro'ham sadāśivaḥ

त्रिषु – in three धामसु – realms, states of awareness यत् – that which भोग्यम् - enjoyed
भोक्ता - enjoyer भोगः - enjoyment चंand यत् - which भवेत् - can be ते यः - from them
विलक्षणः - distinct साक्षी - witness चिन्मात्रः - pure consciousness अहम् - I सदाशिवः - ever
auspicious

I am distinct from whatever it is that constitutes the enjoyed, the enjoyer, and the enjoyment in the three states. I am the witness, pure consciousness, ever auspicious. (18)

The previous verse said that the 'I' illumines whatever there is in the three states of awareness. This verse says that the 'I' is distinct from everything that exists in the three states of awareness. Even though we loosely call them 'states' of awareness or consciousness, the waking, dream, and deep sleep states are, in fact, states of mind and not states of consciousness. Consciousness does not have states. Here three states of mind, whatever they may be, are illumined by consciousness.

The entire universe is available through the waking, dream, and deep sleep states. It is solely on account of identification with the mind that we say that we are awake, that we were dreaming, or that we were sleeping. In fact, waking, dreaming, and sleeping are functions of the mind or states of mind. Consciousness ever remains the same; it simply illumines the prevailing state of mind. There is a triad

or *tripuṭī*, which is involved in every experience; there is the *bhoktā*, the subject of the experience or the one who has the experience, there is the *bhogyam* or object of the experience, and there is the *bhogaḥ*, the experience itself. Every experience, therefore, involves the three factors of the subject, the object, and the interaction between the two. This triad constitutes, without exception, the entire creation or the entire range of existence. There are various sets of triads or *tripuṭīs*; there is the seer-the seen-and the seeing, the hearer-the heard-and the hearing, the eater-the eaten-and the eating, the one who touches-the touched-and the touching, the one who smells-the smelled-and the act of smelling, and so on.

The triad is but the three states of the mind. The self or the 'I,' is essentially distinct from all the three, as in the subject, the object and the experience, or the one who experiences, that which is experienced, and the experience. Consciousness is the illuminator of all the three abodes or three states of the mind, *triṣu dhāmasu*. It is *yad bhogyam*, that which is the object of experience, it is the *bhoktā* or experiencer, and it is *bhogaḥ ca*, the experience as well. We should carefully note what this *mantra* says. The verse says that the 'I' is distinct from all three, the object, subject, and the experience. For example, here is a flower in front of me. The flower is the object of my experience, I am the one who experiences the flower, and the experience of this flower is the process of the flower-thought taking place in my mind. Usually, we equate the self with the subject, the witness, the seer, or the 'experiencer,' the one who has the experience. Yet we are told here that the 'I,' the consciousness, is distinct from all the three.

What is the nature of the subject? The subject is the *aham-vṛtti*, the 'I-thought.' What is an object? The object is the external world. What is an experience? It is the *idam-vṛtti*, the 'this-thought.' Understand that the mind itself has the two aspects of *idam-vṛtti* and *aham-vṛtti*, the this-thought and the I-thought. Consciousness identified with the I-thought becomes the subject; consciousness identified with this-thought becomes the experience, and that which is illumined by the this-thought is the object. The 'I' is said to be different from the subject, the object, and

the experience; it is the illuminator of all three. Like the light of the lamp in the theater that illumines the patron, the dancer, and all the various gestures and modifications and is yet distinct from them all, the self is distinct from the triad. The 'I' is the consciousness in which even the I-ness is also truly not there. Even though the word *ātmā* indicates the 'I,' in the ultimate analysis, *ātmā* does not mean the 'I' that excludes every 'you' or one that excludes anything. The 'I' remains distinct from the subject, object, and experience, and, at the same time, illumines, accommodates, and sustains all the three.

Tebhyo vilakṣaṇaḥ sākṣī, I am the witness. Witness here means illuminator. Witness also is a relative term. We use the word witness with reference to what is witnessed and, therefore, the word witness cannot be primarily applied to the self. The self is simply pure consciousness. Then why is the word witness equated with the self here? Well, it is because some word has to be used, after all, and regardless of what word we use, it is never going to be adequate. Suppose I use the word illuminator, it would imply a deliberate act of illumination, even though there is no calculated attempt or act of illumination on the part of consciousness, the 'I.' In fact, all words, such as subject, witness, or even *ātmā*, the self, convey their meaning through their *lakṣya-artha*, their targeted or implied meaning, and not through their *vāchya-artha* or literal meaning. Therefore, *sākṣī* here does not mean witness in the primary sense, but means that which remains even the very witnessing is also dropped; that is simply pure awareness, the *cinmātra*. We are of the nature of that pure awareness. *Sadāśivaḥ*; *śiva* means auspicious and *sadā* means always. *Sadāśiva* is ever auspicious, and auspiciousness is present where there is happiness; there cannot be auspiciousness in unhappiness. In India, if the death of a relative occurred somewhere, they would send you a postcard informing you of the event. And usually, if the recipient was a close relative of the deceased, he or she would have to take a bath of purification. So the senders would normally write the word *aśubha*, inauspicious, on one edge of the postcard. What is it that is considered 'inauspicious'? It is the news of death; so death is inauspicious. Similarly,

ignorance is inauspicious and sorrow is inauspicious. The self is ever auspicious; free from death, ignorance, and sorrow. We are of the nature of *sat-citānanda*, existence, awareness, and happiness. Lord Śiva is also called *sadāśivaḥ*, ever auspicious. Not even a whiff of sorrow ever touches him—not a whiff of ignorance or a whiff of death. He is called *mṛtyuñjaya*, one who has conquered death. He is *sadāśiva* ever auspicious, even though he lives in the midst of all the inauspicious things. It is very well known that Lord Śiva lives in the midst of inauspiciousness. He dwells in the cremation ground; the most inauspicious of all places. He smears ashes from the funeral pyre on his body; an inauspicious act. He wears around his neck a garland of skulls; a most inauspicious sight. He holds poison in his neck; again, an inauspicious attribute. Snakes crawl on his body and ghosts dance around him; the most inauspicious feature of where he lives. Everything around Lord Śiva is inauspicious and yet he is *sadāśiva*, ever auspicious. This only indicates that the external aspects of inauspiciousness do not attach to him.

Lord Śiva is *asaṅga-udāsīna*, ever unattached, unconnected, and unconcerned. If one is physically isolated from everything and remains auspicious, we may wonder what would happen to that person if he were ever to be in the midst of the inauspicious or touched by the inauspicious. Yet here is Lord Śiva, who is in the midst of every kind of inauspiciousness, and still we always see great tranquility, serenity, and purity in his face. 'That *sadāśiva*, the ever auspicious Śiva I am.' The self also dwells in the midst of many things that are inauspicious. It dwells in this physical body, which is not only subject to death one day, but is also constantly dying. This physical body, characterized by death, is like the cremation ground where death is constantly present, and the various impulses of the mind, like lust, anger, and greed, are like ghosts that are dancing around the self, the consciousness. Many other tendencies are like poisonous snakes. The self is in the midst of all of them, illuminating them all, and still remains untainted by them. The self is ever auspicious.

The equation of nonduality

This *mantra* says, *tebhyo vilakṣaṇaḥ*, I am distinct from them all, the subject, the object and the experience. That seems to mean that the self is one and everything else is different from the self, or that the subject, object, and experience are different

from the 'I.' Does one accept the duality that the self is different from them and they are different from the self? Does one accept that the world of the triad or *tripuṭi* is different from oneself? The answer is no. The fact is that the self is different from the states of the triad, but they are not different from the self. This is an equation of nonduality, as in the example of the actor-beggar, B is equal to A, but A is not equal to B. The beggar is never apart from the actor, while the actor is always distinct from the beggar.

Vedānta teaches of a nonduality that is not an absence of duality, but one that is a fact in spite of the duality. Duality in no way negates or hides the nonduality. If it did, it would be what Pūjya Swamiji calls, "Submarine-philosophy." He asks, rhetorically, "Is the self like a submarine, which is under water and has to surface? Is the nondual *ātmā* submerged in duality, and, will it surface when the duality goes away?" No, it is not that nonduality surfaces in the absence of duality. Nonduality is present in spite of the duality. In fact, the duality is because of nonduality.

This *mantra* said that the self is distinct from all duality. The following *mantra* says that duality is not different from the self. The self has independent existence, but the world of duality does not have any reality apart from the self or independent of the self.

To be continued...

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa
As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

This is the thirty second part of the serial article, continuation from March 2024 newsletter.

भूमावनुपमः सूनुगुणैर्दशरथोपमः ॥ २-१-९

स च नित्यं प्रशान्तात्मा मृदुपूर्वं च भाषते । उच्यमानोऽपि परुषं नोत्तरं प्रतिपद्यते ॥ २-१-१०

कदाचिदुपकारेण कृतेनैकेन तुष्यति । न स्मरत्यपकाराणां शतमप्यात्मवत्तया ॥ २-१-११

bhūmāvanupamaḥ sūnurguṇairdaśarathopamaḥ ॥ 2-1-9

sa ca nityaṁ praśāntātmā mṛdupūrvam ca bhāṣate |

ucyamāno'pi paruṣaṁ nottaraṁ pratipadyate ॥ 2-1-10

kadācidupakāreṇa kṛtenaikena tuṣyati |

na smaratyapakārāṇāṁ śatamapyātmavattayā ॥ 2-1-11

All those years Dasharatha had no son, now he wanted to see Rama take command in his palace. It was right that Rama take the kingship. Dasharatha sent word to Vasishtha and the great ṛṣi agreed that the time was right. The royal court agreed it was the right time. The representatives of the people and the wise men in the society and the lesser kings in Dashartha's empire, kings who had enjoyed the benign and protective rule of Dasharatha, kings who never warred with each other nor stirred rebellion, were all called to assembly. Dasharatha broke the news, "You all know me. I have long been your ruler. I have tried to see that *dharma* is given the best place. I have always let my personal likes and dislikes serve the rule of law. But an ageing person is not the best ruler of a kingdom. Now my senses and judgment are not always under my control, because of age not because of lack of will. This old body and mind are not capable of what they were before. I want to choose a Prince Regent, and among these four sons I think Rama, son of my first queen, by right of seniority, should be the natural selection. But seniority should not be the sole criterion in the selection. Suppose the eldest were weak or incapacitated or angry or in some way lame or unjust. That person should not be chosen as the would-be king. You, the assembly, should voice your opinion openly. It should be the selection of all of us. I want your opinion. Then there will be no word against the selection. The deserving prince should be, without any favorit-

ism on my part, the choice of all. Please think it over and pitch in and be dispassionate; I am ready for retirement.”

Dasharatha thought that by order and virtue, Rama should be king. There is also a sense of a certain fortune that comes with a ruler. Whether there will be plague or drought, whether the people will suffer, is in the hands of the king. A citizen can be unlucky, but not a king. Dasharatha believed that where Rama went, Goddess Lakshmi would follow. Often the first child is favored, or the last. The middle one is forgotten. Though one's children are equally loved, the parent's mind runs in the groove of *samskāra* and considers only one possibility. Certain inhibition can prejudice a decision. King Dashartha asked those who were gathered to provide objectivity in the selection of the Prince Regent, the future emperor.

यद्यप्येषा मम प्रीतिर्हितमन्यदœ विचिन्त्यताम् । अन्या मद्यस्थचिन्ता तु विमर्दाभ्यधिकोदया ॥ २-२-१६

श्रुत्वैतदœ वचनं यन्मे राघवं पतिमिच्छथ । राजानः संशयोऽयं मे तदिदं ब्रूत तत्त्वतः ॥ २-२-२४

कथं न मयि धर्मेण पृथिवीमनुशासति । भवन्तो द्रष्टुमिच्छन्ति युवराजं महाबलम् ॥ २-२-२५

yadyapyeṣā mama prītirhitamanyad vicintyātām |

anyā madyasthacintā tu vimardābhyadhikodayā || 2-2-16

śrutvaitad vacanaṁ yanme rāghavaṁ patimicchatha |

rājānaḥ saṁśayo'yaṁ me tadidaṁ brūta tattvataḥ || 2-2-24

kathaṁ na mayi dharmeṇa pṛthivīmanuśāsati |

bhavanto draṣṭumicchanti yuvarājaṁ mahābalaṁ || 2-2-25

With one voice, and with their eyes dancing with joy as peacocks do when seeing the clouds, knowing from every perspective that Rama should become king, the assembly spoke their mind and let their love for Rama be known. Then King Dasharatha asked a mischievous question. He was not pleased with their selection process. “Why do you want Rama to be installed as king when I am your ruler? Why are you anxious to have him take my place when I have enjoyed a successful rule for all these years? What is wrong with me? Just because the emperor says something does not mean you have to take my word.” He just wanted to know their choice was clean.

The people replied, “It is a fact that you are old, and you do seem to favor Rama as Regent, but it is Rama who is qualified. He has the royal virtues in full. He is the right person. He is truth and he is committed to truth.” The words of praise and veneration and respect for Rama poured from their mouths in torrents.

Rama was a prince of royal demeanor, beautiful and straight, with a rich and pleasing voice, an able commander and leader, always respectful of the *brāhmaṇas* and others he met in his comings and goings, always with a kind word or question for those he met, a good listener with a sense of intimacy and kindness, humble yet powerful, well-versed in a number of *śāstras*, a master of weaponry and of the Kodanda bow, able to discipline anyone, cheerful and engaging, well-prepared and controlled, free of anger and rash judgment, thoughtful and consistent, firm and confident, never putting himself in a position where he had to withdraw his own words, and wise and energetic. He had endeared himself to everyone.

तमेवंगुणसम्पन्नं रामं सत्यपराक्रमम् । लोकपालोपमं नाथमकामयत मेदिनी ॥ २-२-४८

*tamevaṅguṇasampannam rāmaṁ satyaparākramam |
lokapāloparam nāthamakāmayata medinī || 2-2-48*

“Install Rama as the Prince Regent,” the *ṛṣis* agreed, saying the very Mother Earth herself wanted Rama to come and rule the kingdom.

“Whom else could we choose?” The people were unanimous, no dissension or objection at all. The assembly gave its sanction. Dasharatha got what he wanted. The proper date was researched and set.

नाम स्वं श्रावयन् रामो ववन्दे चरणौ पितुः । २-३-३३

nāma svaṁ śrāvayan rāmo vavande caraṇau pituḥ | 2-3-33

Dashartha sent for Rama, and the prince entered the assembly. Upright and regal, already he looked like a king. With naturalness and spontaneity he carried all his virtues. He showed no sign of complexes, neither self-consciousness nor false humility. I myself prefer a proud fellow to the falsely humble fellow. Rama did *namaskara* to all the people as he came into the assembly. He went straight to Dasharatha. Declaring his father’s name, stating the *gotra* to which he was born

and its main ṛṣis, declaring the sūtras and the veda the gotra followed, and giving his name, Rama prostrated at his father's feet. Rising, Rama looked over the crowd. He saw the kings from the east and the west, from the north and the south. There were people of the Vedic tradition, āryaḥ, and people from outside that tradition. There were mountain chieftains and rulers of the forest kingdoms. The entire empire was represented.

Rama was asked to sit and was addressed by his father, "Well, Rama, it is my desire to install you as the Prince Regent. This assembly, composed of wise and responsible people, agrees."

Rama replied, "Whatever you order, that will be done."

गुणवत्यपि तु स्नेहात् पुत्र वक्ष्यामि ते हितम् । भूयो विनयमास्थाय भव नित्यं जितेन्द्रियः ॥ २-३-४२

कामक्रोधसमुत्थानि त्यजस्व व्यसनानि च । परोक्षया वर्तमानो वृत्त्या प्रत्यक्षया तथा ॥ २-३-४३

guṇavatyapi tu snehāt putra vakśyāmi te hitam |

bhūyo vinayamāsthāya bhava nityam jitendriyaḥ || 2-3-42

kāmakrodhasamutthāni tyajasva vyasanāni ca |

parokśayā vartamāno vṛtṭyā pratyakśayā tathā || 2-3-43

Dasharatha said, "Your virtues are well-known to me; I do not think you need my advice. But, from my experience, let me share these two things with you. Number one, may you at all times remain vigilant and strong, because this office you will assume is an office of jealousy. The crown and the throne are large, and all the people will look up to you with envy. When you occupy the highest office in the kingdom, your humility should be that much more. Secondly, know that power corrupts, and one must be vigilant against it. Keep your passions, your personal pleasures, under control. The rigors of the canon that govern the behavior of a king are to be held. Your personal and your public life must conform to those rigors and rules. Never can misfortune or anger or lust, the things that twist other people, take hold of your heart and be a viable choice for you. Hunting is born of lust. Sleeping during the day is out. Playing dice should be only an occasional pastime. Slandering others is wrong. Womanizing will diminish you. Vanity and indulgence in popular music and dance is not for a king. Maintain your discipline.

To be continued...

Mahābhārata
As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

This is the eighth part of the serial article, continuation from March 2024 newsletter.

In the meantime the snakes began biting Bhima. As each snake bit him, Bhima became a little more conscious, a little more conscious, a little more conscious - because the venom of the snakes proved to be an antidote for the *kālakūṭa* poison. This is how it is with a venom to a venom, a homeopathic treatment. Similar treats similar. With that venom this venom is gone. Soon Bhima was up. He thought, "Nobody is going to be able to tie up Bhima with creepers." The ties fell apart like a weak t-shirt. Then Bhima saw the snakes, and this made him angry. He killed all the snakes, one-by-one, except a few who escaped and made their way to *nāgaloka* down below. Remember, it is all story. It is a drama of *karma* really.

The more I look into this I find the whole Mahabharata is just an illustration of the force of *karma* – how one's own past *karma* catches up in this life. The first chapter, which we have omitted, tells why every character is born. Why Yudhisthira is Yudhisthira. Why Bhima is Bhima. Why Draupadi is Draupadi. Everything is one big drama of *karma*. Vyasa tells us of the force of *karma*, interacting with *dharma*, and through that, therefore, the implication - follow *dharma*. The other side of the coin of *dharma* is *karma*. Because it catches you up if you go against it. *Dharma* and *karma* go together. When, in the analytical books, Jaimini's *mīmāṃsāśāstra*, they analyzed the entire *karmakāṇḍa* of the Veda, the introductory *sūtra* is neither *athāto karmamīmāṃsā* nor *karmajijñāsā*. The *sūtra* is *athāto dharmajijñāsā*. Later also, in the Gita, Lord Krishna does not say, "*sarvakarmāṇi parityajya*," he says, "*sarvadharmān parityajya māmekam śaraṇam vraja*." Because *dharma* is *karma*. But when you say *dharma*, what kind of *karma* should it be? That is the question. That is all included there, in Mahabharata, in Gita. Therefore *dharma*, the word, is used, and *adharma* will naturally come. Once you know the *dharma*, the *adharma* naturally becomes clear. The whole Mahabharata is the life of a family, no doubt history. But this historical account of certain events is poetically presented

to reveal *karma* and *dharma*.

The king of snakes was Vasuki. The snakes who had escaped Bhima excitedly told Vasuki, "Look at this guy Bhima. Again and again we bit him and all he did was wake up. Each bite just made him stronger. Then he was up, and he destroyed almost all of us. You should see this guy. He is somehow different." Vasuki went and saw for himself the majestic Bhima, and Vasuki as though fell in love with Bhima. Vasuki, king of snakes, asked his minister to bring jewelry and precious gifts for Bhima. The minister suggested that Bhima was not going to like jewelry and he was not going to wear earrings. The one thing the snakes had for Bhima was an elixir that would give strength to the one who drank it. They decided to give mighty Bhima the elixir that would make him grow even stronger. Vasuki had the elixir brought, and he told Bhima, "You take one cup and you will have one-thousand-elephant strength." It may have been an exaggeration, but definitely he would have elephant-like strength.

"Is that so," said Bhima, and he took one cup and he took another cup and he took another cup and he took another cup until he said he could not take any more and he could not talk any more. He took it all, to the neck. Then he fell down and fell asleep and slept for eight days after these seven cups of elixir. Elephantry, camelry, cavalry, infantry, and chariots – that's what composed the military. This elixir would prove very useful when Bhima dealt with military elephants. Elephants can make chutney out of anything, but Bhima could make chutney out of elephants. He was a person of enormous strength.

Eventually Bhima awoke and looked around and asked, "Where am I now?" Then he remembered where he was and where he was from. He went back to Hastinapura and told the story to his ecstatic family. Bhima said it was a good thing that had happened, because he had downed seven bowls of elixir. He described his new strength as that of seven thousand elephants plus the few he had before, and the elixir had tasted good too. Now Duryodhana and his gang were in for trouble. With so much strength, when you do something wrong, when your

karma is against you, it proves to be good for the other person, for your rival. Thus the poisoning had worked against Duryodhana, and he came to know that Bhima was alive. Duryodhana assumed there would be a problem, a response for what he had done to Bhima, but there was no response from the Pandavas. There was no problem because Vidura had told the Pandavas not to even talk about the incident. Vidura knew that challenging Duryodhana could become the basis for a major fight right now. He knew the Pandavas were not ready for a fight. He advised them to just keep silent, to treat it as though nothing had happened. Kunti saw the wisdom in this, so that is how the Pandavas behaved.

Duryodhana was all simmering fire inside, the fire of envy. He continued to think how he could get rid of the brothers. That was all he thought. It became an obsession, really. In the meantime, Bhishma pondered how to further educate his grandsons. They had learned everything that Sukha and Krpa had for them. Bhishma looked for a qualified person to teach the already-skilled boys the finer points of weaponry and dharmic warfare. This teacher would not be an ordinary person.

What happened was the Pandava boys and the Kaurava boys were playing with a ball, a solid ball made out of fibers and cloth. In the villages today they have these. String is tightly knitted over the surface of the ball, and that makes it very solid and hard. They played with the ball until it flew into a well and got stuck and the game had to stop.

A Brahmana was standing there watching what was happening. When he asked why they had stopped playing, the boys told him the ball had fallen into the well and sunk. He asked, "Why don't you get it out?"

The boys asked, "How can we get it out?"

"Don't you have bow and arrows?" asked the Brahmana. These are all princes, you know. "Can't you use your bows?"

"How do you get a ball out of deep water with an arrow?" they wondered.

To be continued...

What way of life is Hinduism?

There is a popular saying that Hinduism is a way of life. Naturally, the question arises, “What way of life is Hinduism?” or, “Whose way of life is Hinduism?,” “Can any type of life be called Hinduism?”

We have to answer, “Anybody’s way of life cannot be called Hinduism. It is a particular way of life that is called Hinduism.” Naturally, the question arises, “Which particular way of life? Who decides that particular way of life?” We answer, “It is a particular way of life prescribed by the Hindu scriptures.”

What are the Hindu Scriptures?

The next question is, “What are the Hindu Scriptures?” You all know that the Vedas are the primary Hindu Scriptures, and based on the Vedas there are several allied derivative literatures. They all put together form the corpus of Hindu literature. The primary one being the Vedas. We Hindus believe that the Vedas are a gift from Bhagavan Himself, given to us through the Rishis. We have the well-known Shloka:

शिवं शिवकरं शान्तं शिवात्मानं शिवोत्तमं ।

शिवमार्गप्रणेतारं प्रणतोस्मि सदाशिवं ॥

śivam śivakaram śantam śivatmānam śivottamam

śivamārgapraṇetāraṁ praṇatosmi sadāśivam

I offer namaskāra to sadāśiva, which is another name of Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti who has given us the *śivamārgaḥ*, meaning the auspicious way of life. It is *śivasyamārgaḥ*, a way of life given by Lord Śiva, and also it is *śivaḥ mārgaḥ*, an auspicious way of life – both *ṣaṣṭhi-tatpuruṣa* and *karmadhāraya -samāsaḥ*.

Our Vedas are broadly divided into two portions – the *vedapūrvāḥ*, the former portion, and the *veda-antaḥ*, the latter portion. Both of them present two different ways of life. The first portion of the Vedas is called *karma-kāṇḍam*. Therefore, the way of life prescribed by the first portion is called *karma-yoga* way of life. The final portion of the Veda is called *jñāna-kāṇḍam*. The way of life prescribed by the *jñāna-kāṇḍam* is called the *jñāna-yoga* way of life. Therefore, Hinduism consists of two ways of life namely, *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*.

Karma-yoga and Jñāna-yoga

This teaching of the Vedas has been condensed by Lord Krishna in His well-known Bhagavadgītā teaching. Taught by Krishna and compiled by vyāsācārya, Lord Krishna clearly says in Chapter 3 Verse 3 in Bhagavadgītā

लोकेऽस्मिन् द्विविधा निष्ठा पुराप्रोक्ता मयानघ

ज्ञानयोगेन साङ्ख्यानं कर्मयोगेन योगिनाम्

*loke'smivividhā niṣṭhā purāproktā mayānagha
jñānayogena sāṅkhyānām karmayogena yoginām*

The blemish-less one (Arjuna)! The two-fold committed lifestyles in this world were told by Me in the beginning – the pursuit of *jñāna-yoga* for the renunciates and the pursuit of *karma-yoga* for those who pursue activity.

There are two different ways of life known as *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*. Both of them put together make the Hindu way of life. What is the relationship between these two ways of life? Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavadgītā that *karma-yoga* is a stepping stone to entering *jñāna-yoga*, and *jñāna-yoga* is the stepping stone to discovering our final destination which is total fulfillment, otherwise called *pūrṇatvam*, otherwise called *mokṣaḥ*. Thus, *karma-yoga* takes us to *jñāna-yoga*, and *jñāna-yoga* takes us to *pūrṇatvam*. This is Hinduism. This is the Hindu way of life. Since this is given out by the Vedas, it is called *vaidika-mārgaḥ*, otherwise called *sanātana-dharmaḥ*.

The Vedas have designed this way of life consisting of *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* based on fundamental teachings given by the Vedas themselves. If we know and register the fundamental teachings, we will know the significance of the Hindu way of life. What are the fundamental principles?

The Fundamental principles of Hindu way of life.

Principle #1: Seeking Peace, Security, and Happiness (PSH): We see that the entire humanity is involved in a variety of activities. There are millions of human beings, each one having his/her own set of activities, which varies from individual to individual. The Vedas say that in and through these different activities, all human beings are looking for certain fundamental things. Even though the activities are different, all human beings are looking for certain common things; certain universal things, in the past, in the present, and the future. The Vedas say, there are three fundamental things sought after by human beings. What are they? **Peace, Security and Happiness.** **Peace** – Peace is one thing that everyone is looking for. The second thing that

everybody wants is **Security** because everyone constantly has the feeling of insecurity. Right from birth we feel insecure, therefore we hold on to particular individual or things. Throughout our lives, we try to acquire things hoping that they will give us security. Despite having all of them we have a constant sense of insecurity. As we grow older, the sense of insecurity only increases, because everybody faces the Three Ds – Degeneration, Disease, and Death! Thus, we start with insecurity, grow in insecurity, and till death, we have this problem. Therefore, there is ‘looking for security.’ What will give me security? This is the second thing universally sought after. The third and most important thing sought after is **Happiness**. We all look for happiness. So, Peace, Security, and Happiness – **PSH** – put together, the Vedas call *pūrṇatvam*; otherwise *mokṣaḥ* from *apūrṇatvam*. *pūrṇatvam* means fulfillment; *apūrṇatvam* means non-fulfillment. So, we want *mokṣaḥ* from *apūrṇatvam*, and we want *pūrṇatvam*, which constitutes P, S, and H. This is the first Vedic teaching. Everybody seeks PSH.

Principle #2: The world cannot provide Peace, Security, and Happiness (PSH):

The human being looks for PSH in the world that is known to him; grabbing more and more in search of PSH. The Vedas reveal a shocking message. What is that? The entire universe that we know cannot provide these three! A very disturbing and shocking message. People may not agree, but the Vedas ask them to try! Thus, the second lesson is that the entire world cannot provide PSH. The Vedas give us the logic too. The reason is, the entire world is bound by time and space. Therefore, everything is changing. This means everything is continuously appearing and disappearing. Nothing is permanent. Everything appears, survives briefly, and disappears. **Born- is-Gone! Born- is -Gone!** Therefore, in the entire world, there is nothing that we can hold onto permanently. Everything is unstable; everything is fleeting; therefore, one cannot rely on anything for PSH. Whatever we hold onto is insecure! I feel insecure, and because of this, I hold onto something else which is itself insecure. After holding onto something I feel more insecure because I am not only worried about my security, but also about something I held onto. I got something to remove my worry, but I found that my worry had compounded. As my family expands, I am worried more about the security of not only the spouse but the children and the grandchildren. Thus, there is only an expansion of insecurity. The Vedas ask the question, “As long as there is a constant sense of insecurity, the mind will always have concerns, fear, anxiety, etc.; how can such a mind have peace?!” Real deep peace is never possible for

an insecure mind. Whatever peace we experience is only a pseudo-peace, which is nothing but a gap between two disturbing events! Therefore, being insecure, peace is not possible. Even if it is, we will get only a piece of peace, which will go to pieces very soon! Therefore, a fleeting world cannot give us PSH. If security and peace are not in the mind, where is the question of happiness? Happiness, as seen by an individual, is nothing but varieties of entertainments that one engage in, to forget my insecurity! Happiness is nothing but a variety of escapist entertainments – going to a club and partying, drinking all sorts of things, jumping up and down, which is called thrill and happiness, temporarily forgetting the insecurities that are there. After the party is over I go home and lie down. When everybody has left and I do not get sleep, what remains is insecurity. Therefore, the Vedas say, the world cannot give PSH.

The Chandogya Upanishad says,

यो वै भूमा तत् सुखम्। अल्पे न सुखम् अस्ति ॥
yo vai bhūmā tat sukham| alpe na sukham asti
A fleeting world cannot give real happiness;
it can only give pseudo-happiness.

This is the second lesson.

The first lesson is, that everybody seeks PSH. The second lesson is, that the world cannot give PSH. The Vedas then raise the question, “What blessed thing can give me PSH?!” Only that vastu or thing that is permanent, which is not fleeting, which is not bound by time and space, which is called

नित्यं च शाश्वतं शुद्धं ध्रुवम् अक्षरम् अव्ययम्
nityam ca śāśvatam śuddham dhruvam
akṣaram avyayamnityam, śāśvatam,

Only that which is permanent can give us PSH.

We will ask the Vedas,” Where is this permanent thing?” “Is there a permanent thing at all?” Science deals with all kinds of advancements, yet it has not found anything that is permanent. Whatever is discovered in the micro or macro world is impermanent. A star may last for millions of years but will explode. Scientists will name it a Supernova! Is there something permanent? This will be our question.

Nityavastu - Brahman or ātman alone will give PSH.

The Vedas say, “There is! I am willing to help you. Many names are used, among them the Vedas use two important names to call the *nityavastu - brahman* or *ātman*. The

Vedas say that the *nityavastu* alone can give us PSH. To our utter surprise, the Vedas say, that *nityavastu* is not somewhere else. It is inherent in the *anitya-prapañca*. Not only is it inherent, it supports the *anitya-prapañca*, but we ignore it. Being obsessed with the universe and worldly activities, we are distracted by the changing world, we miss the changeless reality, that is inherent in the world and, therefore inherent in ourselves.

Therefore, the Vedas instruct the entire humanity, “If you are interested in PSH, what should you be doing? “ Seek the permanent, discover the permanent, abide in the permanent, and enjoy PSH. We require a permanent thing to hold onto.

We miss that permanent vastu even though it is available in and through the world. Like the movie which is changing all the time. The characters come and go, but in and through the movie characters there is something permanently there. Behind the arriving and departing characters, there is something permanent that also supports the movie. What is that? The screen! You are all wise people! You know the screen, but while we watch the movie, we are so engrossed and absorbed, that we ignore the permanent screen. In life also, we have ignored the permanent.

Jñāna-yogaḥ* will lead to *nityavastu

The Vedas say, “If you are interested, I am willing to help you pursue, discover, abide, and enjoy PSH which is called freedom.” Thereafter, there will be no more struggles in life searching for PSH. Pursue, discover, and abide in the permanent, and let the entire life be a nice entertainment. There are no more struggles in search of PSH because I have found it! This pursuit is called *jñāna-yogaḥ*.

The Vedas make it very clear that scientific methods can never be used to arrive at the permanent. All scientific methods that are used are meant to analyze the changing matter and energy. Science is designed to analyze the changing universe. It is the intrinsic limitation of scientific methods that they cannot arrive at the permanent. Therefore, the Vedas rule out the scientific method of discovering reality. Science is grossly inadequate to discover the permanent.

Jñāna-yogaḥ involves *śravaṇam*, *mananam*, and *nididhyāsanam* - SMN

In the Kaṭhōpaniṣad, yama-dharmarājā says –

नैषा तर्केन मतिरापनेय प्रोक्तन्न्येनैव सुज्ञानाय प्रेष्ठ
naiṣā tarkeṇa matirāpaneyā proktānnyenaiva sujñānāya preṣṭhā.

Jñāna-yogaḥ involves *śravaṇam*, *mananam*, and *nididhyāsanam* guided by the teachings of a Guru who had gained the knowledge from his Guru. Guided by that Guru the pursuit of the permanent consists of *śravaṇam* – receiving the teaching, *mananam* – reflecting over the teaching, and *nididhyāsanam* – assimilating the teaching. This **SMN** method – *śravaṇam* (**S**), *mananam* (**M**), and *nididhyāsanam* (**N**) – is the method for finding PSH! Through SMN find PSH!

This is called *jñāna-yogaḥ* way of life. It is a dedicated pursuit. What is permanent does not have a form. It is abstract like space. Here, there is space in the hall, but it does not have a form. We miss space all the time. Anything that has a form will be deformed! It will change. What is permanent is formless, colorless, and extremely subtle. Therefore, it requires a dedicated pursuit; it being abstract. Thereafter, the Vedas say, that since *jñāna-yogaḥ* is a very fine and subtle pursuit, it requires a lot of preparation.

Karma-yoga* is preparatory for *Jñāna-yoga

The Vedas themselves prescribe a lifestyle that involves several preparatory exercises. All the preparatory exercises put together are called *karma-yoga* way of life.

Karma-yoga helps in entering *jñāna-yogaḥ*. *Jñāna-yogaḥ* will help us discover PSH. Therefore, follow *karma-yoga* and prepare yourself. Follow *jñāna-yogaḥ*, abide in the permanent, and discover PSH. There is no other method other than this. Permanent happiness is possible only by this method

Kaṭhōpaniṣad further says,

तम्-आत्मस्थम् येनुपश्यन्ति धीराः तेषां शान्तिः शाश्वतम् नेतरेषाम् तेषां शान्तिः

tam-ātmastham yenupaśyanti dhīrāḥ teṣāṃ śāntiḥ śāśvatam

netareṣāṃ teṣāṃ śāntiḥ

through this method alone permanent peace is achievable; *netareṣāṃ*

There is no alternative method. Again another Kaṭhōpaniṣad mantrā says

य इमं मध्वदं वेद। आत्मानं जीवमन्तिकात्। ईशानं भूतभव्यस्य। न ततो विजुगुप्सते

ya imam madhvadam veda| ātmānaṃ jivamantikāt|

īśānaṃ bhūtbhavyasya| na tato vijugupsate

Only the one who has gone through these two – *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* – will get out of the sense of insecurity. There will be no fear of degeneration; no fear of disease; no fear of death - *abhayaṃ pratiṣṭhāṃ vindate*. This is possible only through the

karma-yoga plus *jñāna-yoga* way of life, the Hindu way of life; the Vedic way of life; sanātana way of life.

***Karma-yoga* and religious practices**

1. ***Kayikaṁ-vācikaṁ-mānasaṁ-karmāṇi*** This *karma-yoga* has some important features. In *karma-yoga*, our scriptures incorporate countless exercises. Many of them are ritualistic exercises involving three accessories – *trikaraṇam* – the body, the speech, and the mind; as we followed in *rudrābhiṣekam*. We used the body to perform *abhiṣekam*, *pradakṣiṇam*, *namaskāram*, etc. We used our organ of speech to chant the rudram. We used our minds to look at the *śivaliṅgam*, etc. The Vedas prescribe ritualistic practices that involve the three *karaṇas*. We have ritualistic practices that involve only two *karaṇas*! Several exercises involve only the speech and the mind. One can recite the entire *pūjā* without physically performing the *pūjā*, being absorbed mentally – using two *karaṇas*. What is the third possibility? Neither the body nor the speech is used. The *pūjā*, *pradakṣiṇa*, and *namaskāra* are all done mentally. Thus, there are countless ritualistic exercises.

2. ***Pañca-mahā-yajñāḥ*, service activities.** The Vedas also talk about countless service activities as a part of preparatory exercises – *pañca-mahāyajñāḥ* - Service to the family; service to the society; service to the living environment consisting of animals and plants; service to the *pañca-bhūtāḥ*, the non-living environment consisting of the *pañca-bhūtāḥ*; service to the Vedic culture by promoting the Vedic culture. They are all service activities part of preparatory exercises.

We have so many. Nobody can do all of them; nobody needs to do all of them. We can construct our package in consultation with informed people, according to our inclination, resources, and time availability, and prepare ourselves. As time and society change, the emphasis on preparatory exercises will also change.

In *kr̥ta-yuga* it was *dhyāna-pradhānam*, meditation was predominant; in *treat-yuga* was *yajñā-pradhānam*, Vedic fire rituals were dominant; in the *dvāpara-yuga*, *arcana-pradhānam*, floral offerings with *nāma* – names of the Lord – were predominant; in *kali-yuga* all of them declined with *nāma-saṁkīrtanam* being *pradhānam* –

हरे राम हरे राम राम राम हरे हरे

हरे कृष्ण हरे कृष्ण कृष्ण कृष्ण हरे हरे

hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare;

hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare

– either individually, or collectively as a family, as a team, or group changing. If people can sing, it can be in the form of a musical bhajan. We can have our package according to our facility. The Vedas are very considerate. It never insists that everybody must do all activities. This is one feature – ritualistic exercises or service activities, one can choose.

3. **Karma-yoga involves īśvara.** The second important activity of *karma-yoga* is that all these exercises are in the form of worshipping *īśvara*. All preparatory exercises are in the form of *īśvara-pūjā* or *īśvara-ārādhnam*, otherwise called *yajña*. Therefore, *īśvara* must be brought in. **There is no karma-yoga without īśvara.** *īśvara* or God is none other than a personified version of the Eternal, Permanent, and Formless Reality, who is personified as *śiva*, *viṣṇu*, *kr̥ṣṇa*, etc. for the facility of *pūjā* and meditation. The form is not the permanent reality. The form **represents** the permanent reality. Just as the flag is not the country, it only represents the country. Similarly, any form of *īśvara* is brought in to represent the Eternal, Permanent Reality, and all these exercises are in the form of *īśvara-ārādhnam*. Why is it so? It is because of two reasons. One reason is that because of *īśvara - pūjā* we earn the grace of the Lord, which we help prepare ourselves. The second reason is *īśvara-pūjā* reminds us about our goal which is to ultimately find that permanent, changeless Reality represented by *īśvara*. While chanting the rudram in the beginning, a few verses described the Lord *śivas* beautiful features

त्रिनेत्रं पञ्चवक्रकं गङ्गाधरं दशभुजं सर्वाभरणभूषितं नीलग्रीवम्
trinetrām pañcavakrkaṁ gaṅgādharaṁ daśabhujam
sarvābharaṇabhūṣitaṁ nīlagrīvam ...

Initially, Lord *śiva* is personified. Later, it is said, the person is not *śiva* but,

नित्यं च शाश्वतं शुद्धं ध्रुवं अक्षरं अव्ययम् सर्वव्यापिनमीशानम् रुद्रम् वै विश्वरूपिणं
nityaṁ ca śāśvataṁ śuddhaṁ dhruvaṁ akṣaraṁ avyayam sarvavyāpinamīśānam ru-
dram vai viśvarūpiṇam.

śiva is not a person, but *śiva* is the inherent changeless *Brahman* or *ātman*. Keeping this in mind, we will be constantly reminded to not get lost in wordly things. All these are fine, but they are not our primary goal. We must remind ourselves daily during our *pūjā*, and prepare ourselves.

Preparing ourselves consists of three things.

1. The desire for *jñāna-yoga* – *śravaṇam* (S), *mananam* (M), and *nididhyāsanam* (N) – must arise. *karma-yoga* is an appetizer for spiritual hunger.
2. An opportunity to practice *jñāna-yoga*, a conducive lifestyle, a conducive infrastructure, a cooperative family, and the availability of a spiritual guide. All these require the grace of the Lord. The desire and opportunity for *jñāna-yoga* are important. Many have the desire, but no opportunity; many have the opportunity, but no desire. Many do not value for *jñāna-yoga*.
3. The fitness to pursue consistently and systematically, *śravaṇam* (S), *mananam* (M), and *nididhyāsanam* (N). Physical, emotional, and sensory health are required. If the hearing is not proper, whenever Swamiji says Immortal, we may hear it as immoral! Whenever Swamiji says renunciation, we may hear it as remuneration! Therefore, physical, emotional, sensory, and above all intellectual health are required for the pursuit of *jñāna-yoga*.

Pure Existence (*sat*) and Pure Consciousness (*cit*)

A finely developed intellect is required to discern the changeless in the changing world, which will be defined as the Pure Existence principle, and the Pure Consciousness principle. These are the two fine concepts - Pure Existence (*sat*) and Pure Consciousness (*cit*) of Vedanta that our intellects have to absorb and understand. They should not remain as mere words. When we say **saccidānanda**, the words **sat** and **cit** should not be mere words; they should make sense to me, which requires a finely developed intellect. Therefore, all the preparatory exercises are meant to develop a desire (D), have an opportunity (O), and the fitness (F) – **DOF** – to pursue *jñāna-yoga*.

***Karma-yoga* is meant for DOF, and *Jñāna-yoga* SMN is meant for PSH!**

Since *karma-yoga* involves *īśvara*, in Bhagavadgītā Verse 9 of Chapter 3 says

यज्ञार्थात्कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः।

yajñārthātkarmaṇo'nyatra loko'yaṁ karmabandhanaḥ

A person is bound by *karma*, if it is not done as a *yajñā* as *karma-yoga*.

Without bringing in *īśvara* it cannot be called *karma-yoga*.

Worldly /daily activities, by proper attitude can be converted into *karma-yoga*.

Another interesting and important point mentioned in our Vedas is that our daily activities and worldly activities like eating, bathing, sleeping, etc. can be converted into *karma-yoga*, preparatory exercises, by entertaining the proper attitude. By an appropriate attitudinal change, even our daily activities karma can be converted into a *karma-yoga*.

This is what is to be done – before we eat food we should close our eyes and imagine it to be an offering unto Bhagavān who is everywhere, including my big tummy! By this attitudinal change, a simple breakfast will be converted into a *prāṇāgnihotram*. Lunch becomes *prāṇāgnihotram*. Dinner becomes *prāṇāgnihotram*. You can say, “I am a *nityagnihotrī!*” What am I doing? I am successfully eating three meals a day! Thus, daily eating can be converted into a *pūjā*. Bathing can be converted into an *abhiṣekam*. All I must remember is *ārādhayāmi*. When I pour water on my head, I must remember that the Lord śiva resides in my heart, and I am doing an *abhiṣekam*. Taking your bath uttering the words śiva converts it into *karma-yoga*.

Thus, involve *īśvara*, offer everything to Bhagavān, and accept all the consequences as *īśvara-prasāda*. *Īśvara-arpana-bhāvana* plus *īśvara-prasāda-bhāvana*. Śiva, śiva, śiva will convert your very life into a *pūjā*.

यद्यद् कर्म करोमि तत्तदखिलं शम्भो तवाराधनम्.

yadyad-karma karomi tattadakhilam śambho tavārāadhanam

Religious plus Spiritual ways of life is the Vedic way of life

Thus, *karma-yoga* is a religious way of life involving *īśvara-ārādhana*. *jñāna-yoga* is called a spiritual way of life because permanent Reality is often called in English as Spirit. Therefore, *karma-yoga* is a religious way of life, and *jñāna-yoga* is a spiritual way of life. Religious plus Spiritual ways of life is the Vedic way of life; that is the Hindu way of life. Whoever follows a religious way of life leading to a spiritual way of life is a true Hindu. **This is Hinduism.**

On this auspicious śivarātri day, let us offer our gratitude to Lord śiva who has given us this wonderful way of life. Let us not stop with merely offering our gratitude every śivarātri, but let us follow this twofold way of life depending upon our level. Then we will discover the permanent, abide in the permanent, and enjoy Peace, Security, and Happiness. With these few words, seeking the grace of Lord śiva, I conclude my talk.

- Transcribed and Edited by devotees

Sanskritabharati weekend camp at AVG, Saylorsburg, PA, USA

Sanskritabharati volunteers of New Jersey organized a weekend camp at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam (AVG) in Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania from March 22nd thru 24th, 2024. The event named Samskrita-tirthaAtrA was held for the 4th time at AVG. The camp had 120 participants from 40 families from New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland Virginia Arizona and Canada. This event is organized with the objective of bringing together families in the North East USA, who are interested in learning, speaking and promoting Sanskritam. Nearly 40 children in the age groups of 3 to 18 were also part of the camp activities.

The volunteers had arranged many Sanskritam learning activities, including class instructions , language games, skits, group games for the benefit and joy of the camp participants. Introductory classes for absolute beginners, anvaya-racana, vakya-vistAra, bauddhikam and Ramayanam-based group programs for the mid and advanced level students were part of the activities for the adults.

A team of volunteers belonging to Arsha Vidya Bala Gurukulam (AVBG) planned and executed many activities for the children that participated.. These included rendering shlokas, Vedic Heritage, Sanskritam, Ramayanam-based jeopardy games, skit performances, songs, etc. As part of this, the Ashram manager, Shri Suddhatmata Chaitanya, taught some daily prayer shlokas, their proper chanting, importance and meaning. Per the feedback that we received from the parents, the children had a great time at the Ashram and enthusiastically participated. They are looking forward to be at such events in the near future.

The ashram staff under the guidance of its manager Shri Suddhatmata Chaitanya had made excellent arrangements. All the participants had a very comfortable stay and delicious satvik food during the stay. The camp organizers were able to conduct their planned activities at the various classrooms and at the yoga studio. During the camp conclusion event, Shri Suddhatmata Chaitanya shared with the participants, information regarding the upcoming ashram programs and invited all of them to join and seek Ishvara's blessings during the Lord Dakshinamurti Temple's Kumbabisekham celebrations planned to be held from May 17th thru 19th this year.

The kitchen staff at AVG prepared delicious food and kept the camp participants in good charm. The office staff, room service personnel and others were very kind and made the whole event a relishable experience. Nearly 50% of the participants were first time visitors to the ashram and they look forward to attend the various programs organized by AVG. By the grace of Lord Dakshinamurti , Samskrita-tirthaAtrA 2024 at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam was a great success and with the excellent support provided by the Ashram, we look forward to having many more participants at this event in the coming years. *Om Tat Sat*

Ashtavakragita Vedanta Retreat with Swami Sachidanandaji

Arsha Vidya Pitham, Saylorsburg, PA hosted a spring weekend Vedanta course on the topic of Ash-tavakragita lead by Swami Sachidanandaji from April 4 to April 7th, 2024, at the facility and made it available to remote participants. It was an honor to be among the many brothers and sisters who were also called to participate in this sacred space with a Spiritual leader who translated and explained the teachings of the honorable Sage Ashtavakra in simple terms and in English.

Sage Ashtavakra's name reflects the eight deformities he was born with and is the author of the text Ash-tavakrgita (song of Sage Ashtavakra). This sage was the teacher of King Janaka (father of Mother Sita), who had all material wealth, was very successful, very much involved in worldly transactions and yet was a seeker of TRUTH. King Janaka was called to explore "freedom" while living his life responsibly and fully, while learning to be a mere witness to it all, without any emotional attachments. King Janaka was taught by the sage to accept any situations for what it is and to let go of the negative feelings for "contentment" (TRUTH) to take its place. And at a higher vibrational level to be a "witness" to navigate through the worldly plane with all its ups and downs, all the while recognizing himself in all manifestations around him, anchoring in that "Oneness".

We "witnessed" and felt a beautiful display of Mother Earths power (a safe Earthquake) at the same time Swamiji was elaborating on being a "witness" as the "Consciousness" and not the body. The timing of the Earthquake with the rumbling and deep shaking that was felt in few states of the US East Coast region including at the lecture hall, could not have been any more perfect!

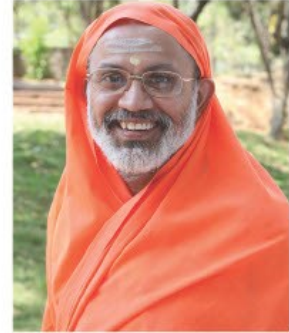
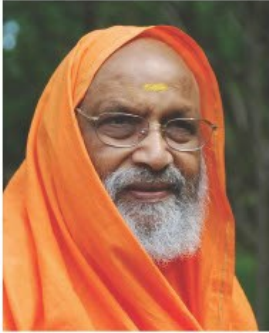
The facility at the Saylorsburg gurukulam is serene, connected to nature and with impeccable daily spiritual practices of the seekers who occupy that space. It is maintained clean both outdoors and indoors and offers well balanced choices for nourishing the body at the cafeteria at mealtimes.

Daily activities start at 5:15 am with Ganapati Homa, then morning Abhiseka with Rudram chanting before classes start. After the evening arati and dinner, the day ends with a Satsang. The retreat schedule had a nice flow with daily activities such as Swamiji's guided meditation several times during the day, classes, satsang, and guided yoga practice. An opportunity to sit down with Swamiji and other students during mealtimes was well received and appreciated. All interactions were conducive to learning for a seeker in a company of likeminded seekers.

The positive and successful outcome of this retreat is due to the leadership of care, compassion, and patience from the spiritual leader Swami Sachidanandaji. Swamiji's open mindedness, nature of welcoming inputs and questions from the students, and listening to understand other viewpoints added a safety net and the freedom for the students to explore and expand their understanding and comprehension of the sacred wisdom.

Appreciate the energy and enthusiasm of Swamiji, students and the facility management team for creating the space for continued higher learning.

Gurupurnima residential retreat



Arsha Vidya Gurukulam
(Sruti Seva Trust), Anaikatti

*is pleased to announce
a weekend residential retreat
by*

Swami Sadatmananda Saraswati

Gurus of Dattatreya

from

20th Jul – 21st Jul 2024

(Including Gurupurnima celebrations on 21st Jul 2024)

Orientation on 19th Jul, Friday

For registration, kindly visit <https://arshavidya.in/camps-retreats/>

For further details, kindly contact the office through phone or email

Email : office@arshavidya.in

Phone : +91-9442646701 , +91-422-2657001

Vedanta Retreat at Jnana Pravaha, Manjakudi

Retreat on the 17th chapter of UPADESA SAHASRI at Jnanpravaha, Manjakkudi from March 22-27, 2024 by Swamini Satyavratandaji

At the outset, our humble pranams to Swamini Satyavratananda for the Vedanta spiritual retreat.

Vedanta retreat was inaugurated by Shri. Srinivasanji, the correspondent of Swami Dayananda Educational Trust, with a prayer of Swami Dayananda Panchakam composed by Swami Paramarthanandaji. He honoured Swamini and Maheshji and he appreciated Swamini's completion of 25 years of Vedanta teaching. Swamini honoured Sri. Srinivasanji and Swami Ramesvaranandaji.

The session commenced on "Right Knowledge", 17th chapter of UPADESA SAHASRI written by Adi Shankaracharya. The sishyas are blessed to gain the right Knowledge under the right Guru at the right place.

The session by Shri. Maheshji, on Shankara Vijayam, has helped in understanding the life achievements of Adi Shankara. It was so heartrending that brought tears in many eyes. It was a life experience as Shri. Maheshji illustrated Adi Shankara's journey from Kaladi to Kedarnath.

Highlights of the retreat.

- ◆ Swami Ramesvaranandaji explained about the various facilities available in Jnanpravaha, study room, meditation hall, reading room with library and also about the Digital archives for the benefit of the participants.
- ◆ Sishyas had the opportunity to visit green organic, herbal farms.
- ◆ Blissful chanting by the students of Vedapathashala.
- ◆ Everyone did gopuja.
- ◆ Darshan of Lord Lakshminarayana Perumal and Kailasanatha Swamy everyday.
- ◆ Satvik food served by courteous people.

Swami Ramesvaranandaji honoured Swamini and Maheshji with Pujya Swamiji's Mandukyopanishad books and Sri Bhaktavijayam book respectively.

We are very grateful to Mrs. Sheela Balaji, Chairperson and Managing Trustee of Aim for Seva, for all the services, and her devotion and commitment to fulfil the vision of Pujya Swamiji. We humbly submit our pranams to Swamini for arranging an excellent Vedanta retreat at Pujya Swamiji's birthplace, and we also thank everyone in the Ashram who helped for this life-time unforgettable experience.

- Report by LATHA

photos in the cover page #2

Newsletter Articles - recommendations

Arsha Vidya Newsletter is regularly publishing various reports from Arsha Vidya related organisations. In order to encourage and accommodate these reports followings are suggested, in view of the fact that Vedanta related articles from Arsha Vidya Swamijis and Swaminis are given prime importance.

1. Reports should reach Editor (Ramachandran) at avgnl2014@gmail.com well in advance, preferably before 15 th of the respective month.
2. Reports, ideally, should not exceed more than one page. Accompanying photos, if any, will only be put in the wrapper pages, based on the availability of the printing space.
3. Camp reports feedback from participants, if any, also to be accommodated within one page report.
4. Dia-critical marks corresponding to Sanskrit terminology should be compatible to the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST).
5. Reports are to be both in word as well as in pdf format.

- Editor

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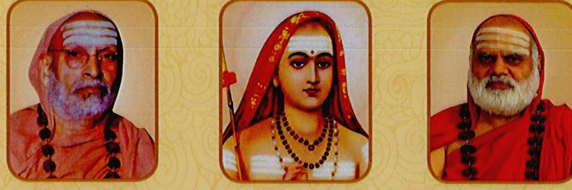
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**Swami Jagadatmanandaji receiving the Vidya Bharati Puraskar
Award for Arsha Vidya Gurukulam from the Governor**



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Sri Vidyatheertha Foundation
Chennai

Shankara Vijayam Festival

to mark

Suvarna Bharathi

Golden Jubilee Year of Sannyasa Ashrama of
His Holiness

Jagadguru Sri Bharathi Theertha Mahaswamin

(Shankaracharya of Sri Sringeri Sharada Peetham)

We deem it a great privilege to present

Vidya Bharathi Puraskar

as per the directions of

His Holiness

Jagadguru Sri Vidhushekhara Bharathi Swamin

(Sri Sringeri Sharada Peetham)

to

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

(Sruti Seva Trust),
Coimbatore.

for their rich contribution to promotion of
India's Culture and Heritage.

Year : Shobakiruthu
Month: Meena
Day : Shukla Paksha Panchami
Date : Saturday, 13th April, 2024.


Managing Trustee