

Guru-Pūrṇimā (2021) at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti

The Guru-pūrṇimā celebrations was conducted in the AVG lecture hall. The altar with śaṅkarācāryaji, Vēdavyāsaji and all other gurus was well-decorated by the students of the two-year course. The gurukulam accommodated a few guests who wished to participate on this occasion. Swamini Brahmaleenananda, swamini Vedarthanandaji and swamini Shardanandaji, sw Prashantanandaji , sw Jagatdatmanandaji , acharyaji and several other students, guests and teachers were present.

The function started at 10 am with anujna puja in Guru-teertha followed by shobhayatra carrying puja material from Guru-teertha to main lecture hall chanting gurustotram and placed at the altar. Guru puja was performed to Vyāsa Bhagavan and other acharyas as per tradition by our two resident priests- Sri Rambhatji and Sri Krishnaji.

After the puja, Acharya Sw Sadatmanandaji sang a short bhajan - *guru maharaj, guru jai jai para brahma sadguru jai jai*. In the following stanzas of the bhajan, Swamiji very nicely added in place of *sadguru jai jai* the name of each of the gurus represented at the altar - from Vēdavyāsaji, śaṅkarācāryaji to Sw Taranandaji, Sw Chinmayanandaji, Sw Pranavanandaji to Sw Dayanandaji jai jai – saluting each one of them. This was followed by a talk in English by Swamiji. In his talk Swamiji highlighted the importance of guru-purnima. He also spoke of the important aspects of a guru-shishya relationship. The transcripts of swamiji's talk is given below.

This was followed by a **talk by Swamini Brahmaleenanandaji** in Tamil.

Swamini elaborated on two important points. Why do we celebrate Teachers' day and guru-pūrṇimā separately? Because the role of teacher and guru are different. Generally, a teacher teaches the student different subjects, but both live their own private lives. The teacher does not interfere into the student's life outside the school. Whatever the teacher teaches, always leaves something still more to be learnt. Whereas the guru not only teaches but takes responsibility for the entire person, transforms one's life and leads one to *pūrṇatvam* desiring nothing further to be learnt. Secondly, Swamini spoke of how the guru handles all the *namaskarās* and *stutis* received. Anyone who takes the *namaskarās* and *stutis* received as meant for himself allowing them to stagnate with him, is bound to get a bloated ego leading to his own destruction. The guru understands - I am only a link in the *parampara*, a conduit and immediately passes on the *namaskarās* and *stuti* received to his/her teacher, then to the teacher's teacher, finally going upto the *ādiguru*. Also while blessing the student, guru considers it as īśvara's blessing flowing through him to the student. Swamini also paid respects to her teacher, Pujya Swamiji by

highlighting his quality of *saulabhyam* – easy accessibility and quality of *dayā* - compassion. In Pujya Swamiji's pictures, one can see his eyes expressing his *dayā* and his face reflecting his *ānanda-svarupa*. He was always bubbling with *ānanda* and gave others *ānanda*. May we all have the grace to learn from Pujya Swamiji and be blessed by him.

Swamini said - We express our devotion with not just '*namāmi*, I salute' but with '*pranato'smi* - I remain saluting all the time' because we are always indebted to our guru for what we have received from him/her. *Om tat Sat/*

The guru pūrṇimā celebrations ended with a special lunch prepared for the occasion by the kitchen staff. In the evening satsang, Smt Sharda Subramaniam sang several guru bhajans and Pujya Swamiji's compositions. It was a happy day where we all got an opportunity to express our gratitude to the guru parampara and felt blessed to be in the presence of our teachers.

Talk by Swami Sadatmanandaji, Chief Acarya -

Today we are celebrating Vyāsa pūrṇimā otherwise called Gurupūrṇimā. Pūrṇimā means full moon day. Vyāsa pūrṇimā means a full moon day dedicated to Vēdavyāsa. This day happens to be the birthday of Sri Vēdavyāsa. In vedic culture, the importance of Vēdavyāsa can never be over-emphasised. Vēdavyāsa is considered to be a re-incarnation of Lord Vishnu- *vyāsāya viṣṇu rūpāya vyāsa rūpāya viṣṇavē*.

He is called Vēdavyāsa because he compiled the vēdas with the help of his 4 disciples- Paila, Vaishampayana, Jaimini and Sumantu. Otherwise his original name is Krishna Dwai-payana. He has contributed a lot for the preservation of Śruti ie, vēdas and also smṛiti. Smṛiti means secondary literature based on vēdas which are called primary literature. He has written Vyāsasmṛiti. And also Bhagavad Gita is compiled by him. The slokas were composed by Vēdavyāsa, but the teaching was given by Lord Krishna in prose form. Vēdavyāsa has written 18 puranas and he was given the title Purana-muni. He has contributed to yoga sastra by writing a commentary called Vyāsa bhashyam on yoga sutras. Mahabharata, an itihāsa. was written by Vēdavyāsa. Thus he has contributed to Śruti, smṛiti, purāṇa, yoga sastra and itihāsa. Therefore, we express our gratitude to Vēdavyāsa on his birthday. In our culture a single person is not considered important. The paramapara is considered important. Vēdavyāsa represents this guruparampara. Therefore, his birthday is also celebrated as Gurupurnima- full moon day dedicated to guru, the teacher. Infact, we have a teacher's day on sept 5th on the birthday of Dr Radhakrishna, former president. But in our tradition, Vēdavyāsa's birthday is celebrated as teacher's day.

What is the significance of Guru Pūrṇimā ?

On this day we express our gratitude to all our gurus who have contributed a lot in our

life. *gṛṇāti upadishati iti guru*- One who teaches is called a guru or guru is explained as - *gu-kārō andhakāra: ru-kārō tannivartakaḥ; andakārō nirōditvāt guruḥ iti abhidhīyatē.*— *gu* means darkness and *ru* means remover of darkness and since guru is removing darkness of ignorance, therefore he is called guru. In various areas, we have ignorance and he removes them and so a teacher is called guru. We express our gratitude to our guru on this day. The significance of guru is talked about in Śruti, smṛti, purāṇa. In sruti there is a sentence in Mundaka upanishad- *tad vijñānārtam gurumēvābhi gacchēt samitpāṇiḥ śrōtriya brahmaniṣṭhaḥ* - For knowing this ultimate reality, one should go to a teacher appropriately. There Bhashyakara makes a note in his Bhashyam in the Bhagavad Gita- *śāstrjñōpi svatantrēnaiva brahmajñāna-anvēṣaṇam na kuryāt* - So even if a person is an expert in śāstra, grammar, nyaya, etc, one should not try to understand the vision of sastra independently because one may be misled and confused, if he tries to understand independently. Therefore, Śruti says - *gurumēvābhi gacchēt* - One should go to a guru. Chandogya Upanishad says- *ācāryavān puruṣaḥ vēda* - A person who has got a teacher, he will know *brahmātmatattvam*. Sruti gives this guarantee. In Svetasvatara Upanishad it is said- *yasya dēvē parā bhakti, yathā dēvē tathā gurau tasya hi ētē kathitārthāḥ prakāśantē mahātmanaḥ* - If a person has devotion to the lord and the same devotion to one's guru to that person the words of sastra will be revealed.

If this devotion is not there, even though person listens or reads sastra, one will not get the real purport of sastra. They also add, *kathitāḥ akathitāḥ api* - Even if certain points teacher has taught or not taught, the person who has devotion will understand whatever is implied. In Chandogya Upanishad elsewhere it is said- *ācāryād ēva vidyā veditāt sādīṣṭam prāpyatē* - Knowledge received from acharya, that alone becomes effective. Thus sruti talks about greatness of the guru. In smṛti also, in Bhagavad Gita the lord says - *tad viddhi praṇipātēna paripraśnēna sēvayā* – May you attain this knowledge by going to the teacher and doing seva, doing namaskara and by asking questions, then you can learn from guru.

There is a text called Gurugita which is a part of Skanda purana. Thus not only sruti and smṛti, but also puranas talk of the importance of guru. This text has so many slokas which are full of descriptions of the importance of guru. If understood properly, it helps to develop devotion. The gurustotram - *akhaṇḍamaṇḍalākāram* is extracted from this text. In this text there is a very popular sloka chanted in north India - *dhyānamulaṁ gurōḥ mūrtiḥ, pūjāmūlaṁ gurō pādamaṁ, mantramūlaṁ gurōrvākyaṁ, mōkṣamūlaṁ gurōḥ kṛpā* – The root of meditation is the form of guru

(Idea is when you start your meditation you remember your guru). The feet of guru is root of puja (you start puja remembering the guru). Traditionally a mantra becomes mantra when it is received from the guru , therefore it is said here the utterance of guru alone

is the basis for mantra and the basis for attaining freedom is the grace of guru. Thus, greatness of guru is presented in all of them- Śruti, smṛti, purāṇas.

What are the important aspects of the relationship between guru and śiṣya?

We can now think a little about the relationship between guru and śiṣya.

Pujya Swamiji would warn against idealising anything. But a good effective relationship between guru- śiṣya will have certain aspects. If you are aware of that, it will help us in relating to our guru.

1) The first aspect of the relationship between guru and śiṣya is - mutual love and respect . Means guru loves and respects the disciple and the disciple loves and respects his/her guru. You must have heard of the disciple loving and respecting guru. But guru also loves and respects the disciple. Only the expression of love and respect on the part of the guru will be different. Without having love for the disciple, real teaching cannot happen.

Like the milk from the mother cow flows only when the mother has love for the calf. Similarly, real effective teaching can happen only when guru has love for the disciple. Out of love alone, the teaching comes out. Otherwise he will blabber something. Pujya Swamiji is used to say very nicely - What is the meaning of guru having respect for the student ? It means guru does not take the disciple for granted as” *Oh, this person is here only. If I take the class okay, if I don’t take also, it is okay*”. This is taking śiṣya and his time very lightly, thinking that anyway, he/she will not understand whatever I say. So, I need not prepare anything whatever I say is okay. That type of approach shows that guru does not have respect for the student. Pujya Swamiji was very, very particular that you should never take your student for granted. So guru also has got respect for the disciple. And the disciple, the student has respect for the guru.

Not only respect, but love also is an important element. Otherwise without love, there will be an atmosphere of fear because sometimes in respect, there is fear. So love will make a comfortable atmosphere , create a comfortable space between the guru and śiṣya. So śiṣya also has love for Guru, not only as a part of parampara, but as a person. The student loves to be in guru’s company. Not thinking that “*I am waiting, when this course is going to be over and I can run away at the earliest*” - that is not the feeling of the disciple. Disciple would love to be in the company of the teacher. Love for the teacher, respect for the teacher, respect for his knowledge, respect for the guru as a person. This is the first aspect of a good effective relationship between Guru and śiṣya.

2) The second aspect is -the student needs to have shraddha in both sastra and Guru. What is shraddha? shraddha means *prāmāṇya buddhi* - sense of validity. If that is not there, either in shastra or in Guru, then the relationship will not be smooth.

And also, we talked about bhakti where there is reverence for the guru parampara and sastra which was covered under love and respect .

3) The third aspect of relationship is that both the student and teacher need to have patience especially in the pursuit of atma jnanam. Guru needs to have patience because the śiṣya may not understand first time, second time, third time even. So guru needs to tell again and again.? And also śiṣya has to have patience to listen to the same subject matter presented in different ways. If śiṣya feels that guru is repeating the same thing - atma is brahman, atma is brahman and not proceeding further. Same thing is repeated because it is not understood, therefore needs to be told again. *bhūyō'pi pathyaṁ vaktavyam* – If something is good, it should be told again and again. And therefore, patience is required.

4) The fourth aspect of relationship is that śiṣya does not to expect perfection from the guru and of course, guru also would not expect perfection from śiṣya. As a human being, no guru will be perfect. I have seen so many gurus, but I have not seen any perfect guru. From upadhi standpoint, perfection is not possible and not required. If shishya idealizes that my guru should be like this. Then every time he will try to see whether Guru is behaving like this or not. He will keep on judging. And that relationship will not last. Even if it lasts, it will not be effective.

5) One more thing about this guru- śiṣya relationship is that in the initial stage if possible, one should have only one guru. Modern problem is that people have multiple gurus. Morning they listen to one guru, afternoon another and again evening and night another. So they listen to 3-4 different gurus. Like having 4 different meals in a day. If one listens to one guru at a time and then certain things you want to learn further, you go to a second guru. That is alright. Listening to so many gurus simultaneously in the initial stage of sadhana is not advisable. Why? It is not that any one guru is right or wrong. All may be right. But every guru has his own style and emphasis. One guru will be emphasizing one thing. The other guru will be emphasizing another thing. Therefore, you may be confused and all gurus will be doing different different texts. You are listening to Tattva Bodha of one swamiji and Mandukya Upanishad of another swamiji, So, you have all reasons to be confused.

Therefore, in the initial stage, if possible listen to one teacher and if you are not satisfied, go to the next teacher, the next teacher. It's all right. In Siva samhita, it is said, you can give one year to one teacher. If you are not satisfied, you can go to another teacher. But atleast one year you should wait. But nowadays students like to listen to multiple teachers. Even then, consider one guru to be your main teacher. That at least you can do. You can say- “Primarily I will be following this teacher, the other teachers I am listening, but one teacher, I will consider as my guru”. Like all women are my mother, but I have my

own mother. So one teacher, you consider to be the main one. That is very important. Otherwise, I have seen people are so confused. They think more the merrier. One guru is good, two gurus is better and three gurus is the best. It doesn't work that way. Like one medicine is a good for blood thinner. But just because it is good, if you take three tablets, it is not good. So initially if possible have one guru or if that is not possible, consider one guru as your main guru.

6) And another aspect for good relationship between guru and shishya is - Do not compare your guru with any other gurus. My guru is my guru for me. He's the best for me. Thoughts like - he is better than others or not so good like that other guru. Or my guru is not that popular. That guru is so popular- All these comparisons should not be there. So no comparison of one guru with other gurus. Also, no comparison with other disciples. Like- See that other disciple is better than me. He is getting more attention from guru. I get less attention - All this can be very detrimental to the guru-śiṣya relationship.

7) One more aspect of this relationship is śiṣya, the student has got the attitude of gratitude. Always he or she feels indebted, grateful to the teacher. If this gratitude is not there, vidya will not bless. There is always gratitude for whatever we have learned, we appreciate the grace of the guru.

These are the different aspects of guru-śiṣya relationship which one should take care of for effective learning.

Now question is –“Swamiji, how to develop this devotion to the guru. How to strengthen my devotion?”

- One thing is, Have gratitude and whenever there is opportunity, please express the gratitude. By stuti, by pooja. by seva, by some form of contribution. Whenever occasion, arises express your gratitude appropriately. Expressing the feelings, strengthens the feeling. And therefore, whenever there is an opportunity to do seva, to do puja, whatever, that will help us to develop this devotion to the guru. And we take care of those factors which are becoming obstacles to have devotion like comparison, expecting perfection, etc.

If these things are taken care of, then we will have the blessings of the guru.

- One more thing is a śiṣya, to make the relationship better, let there be sincerity in the pursuit. The most important thing which pleases the guru is the sincerity of the student. Not just dakshina, etc. The main thing is the sincerity, the readiness to learn, doing more and more follow-up, if homework is given in any class it is done, or any other type of follow up required it is done and one comes prepared to class. That is highly motivating for the teacher. It is the responsibility of the student to bring out the best in the teacher. The best is brought out from the teacher by the student. Pujya Swamiji was very

particular of who should sit in front of the teacher. He would tell I require some face in front, which invokes the best from me.

And if all this is done the relationship with the guru will be wonderful. In our tradition, it is said – *ājīvanam trayassēvyāḥ vēdāntō gurur īśvaraḥ. ādau jñānāptayē paścāt kṛtagratva nivṛtayē* - All our life these three are to be worshipped - vedanta, guru and ishvara. Even if we have completed our study, but still gratitude would continue for them. If gratitude is not there, it means a person has not received the vidya properly. If he has received properly, gratitude is bound to be there. so let there be gratitude for the teachers throughout our life. And to express our gratitude, the day like gurupurnima is useful. That is why we have a day like this. Like Mother's day, Father's day. We have a teacher's day called Gurupurnima day. It will help us to express our gratitude in an appropriate manner.

That is why we celebrate gurupurnima. And we need to remember that we are really not worshipping any one individual. We are worshipping the entire parampara, our entire lineage of the gurus which is represented by my teacher. This lineage is started by the Lord Sadashiva himself – *sadāśivasamārambhām śamkarācārya-madhyamām as-madācārya-paryantām vandē guru-paramparām. OR nārāyaṇam padmabhuvam vaśiṣṭham śaktim ca tat putra parāśaram ca*. Either you say Narayana or Shiva. We are worshipping this parampara by worshipping our teacher. And since this parampara is started by the Lord, when you do namaskara to the teacher, it goes to the initiator of the lineage of acharya's. So with this attitude, we express our gratitude through pooja, etc.

And today is the day when sannyasins take **chaturmasya vratam**. In olden days, they used to always be on the move, that is why they were called *parivrAjakAh* and during monsoon time they will be staying in one place in some village. The householders will come and request this sannyasi that you please stay in our place, we will take care of you. This sannyasi will stay in that village and during that period of 4 months of monsoon time, he will be teaching sastra. It is a mutual benefit scheme where these householders are benefited and the sannyasi also is taken care of.

Thus, **chaturmasya vratam** is from purnima upto kṛttikā masa or sometimes upto ekadashi this vratam is followed by sannyasis. During these four months, they will not cross the river. They will remain in one place and follow certain vratha's. But nowadays, sannyasins are busy therefore *pakṣōvai māsaḥ* - one fortnight is equal to a month. By that type of calculation, four months are reduced to two months. Therefore they follow only two months. They will remain in one place. Even now in Rishikesh many mahatmas follow this. They don't cross the River Ganga and they remain whatever side they are for this period. This particular vrata is associated with sannyasi. vratam means vow. *vriyatē iti vratam* -That which is chosen by you to follow is called vratam. And for a non-sannyasi

also, there is vratam. For these four months – – *āsāḍa* to *kṛttikā* - a householder or a brahmacari or a vanaprastha, whichever ashrama a person belongs to, he/she takes some vratam.

This vratam is of two types- One is *tyagalakshanam vratam* – giving up something and the other is *grahanalakshanam vratam* – taking up something for these four months or atleast two months. For two months I will not take sweet or pickle or something you like or are addicted to. Like two month I will not watch TV which I am addicted to. So, whatever is addictive and creating obstacle in your pursuit and if reduced will help in your pursuit. That type of thing can be dropped for four months. But don't drop study of Vedanta or Sanskrit for four months! What you drop should be such that it helps you, not harm or obstruct your pursuit. Or I am talking too much, so for four months, I will not talk or I will talk only after 12 o'clock. The other type is *grahana-rupa* ie, the vow in the form of adopting some new activities. That also is of three types - *kāyika*, *vācika*, and *mānasa*. Like I will do ekadasa pradakshina of Dakshinamurti. Or I will do *pañcōpacāra* puja everyday for 2 months. This is *kayika vratam*. Or *vacika vratam* – Everyday I will do parayanam of Lalita sahasranamam or Vishnu sahasranam or purusha suktam or dakshina murti stotram or whichever sukta that you can take as a vratam. Or manasa vratam - I will do mental Japa or I will do upasana everyday for half an hour on devi or Vishnu or Dakshinamurti.

Also manasa can be taken in a slightly different manner. For example, during these two months, I will pay attention on one particular value. In Dharma sastra, they talk about *ashtaguna*- eight qualities.

* Like *dayavratam*. I am a little bit harsh. So let me have compassion to others and compassion to myself. So everyday, I will pay more attention to this quality. At the end of the day, I will see that did I follow the value of compassion during the day or not? So for these two months I will take up this as my vratam.

* Or *kshamavratam*. I am a very quarrelsome person who easily fights with people. So for two months I will pay special attention to this value.

* Or *anasuyavratam* – not have fault -finding attitude. Some people have a proof-reader's mind. They don't see what is right They see only what is wrong. So that fault-finding, I drop at least for two months, I will not criticize anybody mentally also. Even if I find something wrong, I will say that person is in order. *Sarve bhavanti sthane* - all are in order.

* *akārpaṇyam* -Not having inferiority complex, not looking down upon oneself, healthy self-esteem. *kārpaṇyam* is the opposite – self pity, inferiority complex. Some people have this habit that whenever they get an opportunity, they will put themselves down- I am an

idiot or this idiot had gone. They themselves use the word idiot with regard to themselves. Or my wife and children say I'm useless. I have also started thinking I am useless, good-for-nothing. *akārpaṇyam* is saying I am, okay. Whatever I am, I am in order. With all my background, this is how I can be. I am blessed to be what I am. Pujya Swamiji used this expression - *anugrihithosmi* – blessed I am to be what I am. I am not superior or inferior to anyone. I am ok, acceptable. This is *akārpaṇyam*.

* *asprah* - Not having obsessive binding desire, I want this? I will not take no for an answer. That type of obsessive insistence, we try to reduce.

* *anāyāsaḥ* - relaxation. It's a very important value. And I, as a means relaxation, keep appreciating *viśrāntō'ham*, *viśrāntō'ham* - Relaxed I am. I have reasons to be relaxed. Keep seeing this. This is a good vratam. I really love this vratam of relaxation. Take a vratam that I will not run with anxiety for two months. I will do things in a leisurely manner. I will start on time and I will be relaxed.

* And *mangalam* - auspicious. In thinking, there is auspiciousness - *sarvē bhavantu sukhinaḥ*. In my verbal expression there is mangalam. I speak, always beautiful words. Pujya Swamiji would always say in tamil to those he met – *nalla iru* – be well. I love that. So always having mangalam in your expressions. Not using harsh words. In thinking mangalam, in verbal expression mangalam, physically also mangalam. Applying chandana, bhasma are signs of mangalam. It is our culture. People are nowadays, feeling ashamed of putting these. You know, when you apply chandanam, Kumkum, bhasma, you are worshipping the Lord who is present in our body. So, mangalam in our expression, in our demeanour.

Thus, I will pay attention to anyone of these qualities. That also can be a vratam. And thus today can be a starting point for following a vratam. I have given a variety of vratam, so you can choose the one appropriate for you. As I said today is the day, we invoke the grace. We have really so many reasons to feel blessed that we are part of this parampara, that we are exposed to this parampara where Pujya swamiji's and his disciples are our teachers. Where Vēdavyāsa is a great link, where śaṅkarācārya is one of our brightest link. It is one of the great links started with Lord Sadashiva. We express our gratitude, we offer our namaskara to all our acharyas and seek their blessings, so that we can continue our pursuit and fulfill the purpose of human life.

With this, I conclude. *Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ*.

Note: Photos in wrapper pages (#2 and #31)