

2021 New Year day celebrations at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti

Special abhisekham and puja was performed on Saturday 1st January 2021 to Lord Dakshinamurti at the temple. Students of the 2 year course and some limited guests were present for the occasion. Live streaming was done on our YouTube channel – *Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti* - for the benefit of the participants of the e-retreat in progress and to other devotees. Over 634 views were recorded on our YouTube channel. The program included anugraha bhashanam by Sw Sadatmanandaji. Swamiji started the talk with a Ganesha bhajan – *ganesha sharanam, sharanam ganesha*.



New Year message from Sw Sadatmanandaji –

First of all I wish you all a Happy New Year 2021! We have so many New Year days every year. We have Tamil New year day, Ugadi in Karnataka and in Gujarat there is another New Year day in kartik masa, shukla paksha pratipada. Today we have this English New Year day. Somebody sent a mail objecting why we should celebrate English New Year day? There is no greenery or blooming of nature at this time. It is not our culture. Why should we celebrate English New Year day especially in an asram? This was in response to our invitations sent out for people to participate in the New Year day puja. Why do we celebrate New Year? We require such days where we can start afresh. Human beings every now and then find that things are not going well and in such situation one

wants to start afresh. The Microsoft CEO wrote a book with the title – ‘Hit Refresh’. Even when our cell phone gets stuck, we reboot it and generally it works! New Year day is also like this. Every now and then we need rebooting. As Pujya Swamiji said – we always require to start afresh and days like this give us an opportunity to start afresh.

One person has written a nice sloka –

न भारतीयो नववत्सरोयम् तथापि सर्वस्य शिवप्रदस्स्यात् । यतो धरित्री निखिलेव माता यतः कुटुम्बायितमेव विश्वम् ॥

This day is not a New Year day of India , but still let this day become the source of auspiciousness for everybody. Since the entire earth is our mother because this entire world is our family only.

Thus for us not only India is our mother, the entire world is our mother, so we celebrate wishing well-being for all. Another practical reason is, if you ask 10 Indians what is the tithi today? what is the nakshatra today? They may not know. But if you ask what is the date today, almost everybody will know. So let us accept the fact, whether we like it or not, the English calendar has penetrated our life. Also we celebrate two birthdays - nakshatra birthday and English calendar birthday. You get chocolates twice!

Moreover we don’t celebrate New Year day with a party, dance or santa claus. We celebrate it in our own religious way. It is one more day to express our gratitude, one more day to tap the grace of bhagavan.

It can be expressed nicely in Hindi -

utsav tho eka bahAna hai, apne ko apno se milAna hai. andhere me rahoge kab tak, ab tho ujjAla yahAn lAnA hai.

Festival is an excuse to meet our own people (and revive our connection in a special way with bhagavan). How long will you remain in darkness ? We need one more occasion to bring light. Therefore we celebrate.

There is a nice saying in English- “ring out the old and ring in the new”. It implies – Let go of 2020 gracefully. And welcome 2021 with the hope for a better future! We let go of the past with gratitude and with the satisfaction of growth, having learnt what is to be learnt from the previous year. In fact some people would like to forget 2020. Many people say that it was a horrible year. Yes, we acknowledge that many people had so many problems, many lost near and dear ones, lost jobs, promotions and increments. Many people had to cancel their trips. So many development plans were suspended. No doubt there was a lot of loss and pain in 2020. We do not deny the fact.

But we did have some positive results in 2020 during the pandemic. First of all the environment improved. We could also find the strength within us, discovering that we could live without so many things. Not only that, we found that we could manage without de-

pending on external help especially people we were always dependent on till now. Also it invoked a contributor in us. We contributed in whatever way we could. It also provided an opportunity for the family to spend time together. People thought of new ideas to get together. Like I heard of someone who organized online family concerts, where different members of the family from different parts of the world met on zoom and had an enjoyable time together. We could also study Vedanta here at the gurukulam without any big interruption. So we could see that we have the capacity to handle challenges. Many things we were holding on to, which were not necessary, we could let go. Thus we have reasons to say goodbye to 2020 with the satisfaction of learning and with gratitude for the growth we got. We do not connect 2020 with bitterness or anger, we connect it with learning and growth.

Now we are ready for 2021 to make it a happy New Year. We wish that may I become happy and may everybody else become happy. The question is - we wish happiness for ourself and others, but how to make my New Year 2021 a really happy year ? The whole year is happy if everyday is more or less happy. Everyday will be happy, if every experience of the day is more or less happy. So how to make every experience happy?

If you ask a Vedanta teacher, he/she will say –

तमात्मस्थम् येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीरास्तेषां सुखं शाश्वतम् नेतरेषाम् । Ka U २-२-१२

Those who discover that limitless reality within oneself, for them alone permanent happiness is possible.

So the first answer for how to be happy is-

Discovery of fullness of one's own true nature is the ultimate, final way of remaining happy. Because you discover happiness as your own nature and therefore it will never go away. But to discover that inner fullness, you need to be relatively happy. A relatively happy person alone can understand and appreciate the fact that I am *ananda-svarupa*. This is the principle with respect to the other aspects of *atma-svarupa*. To discover you are *shAnta-svarupa*, you need to be relatively *shAnta*. You require relative composure to discover you are of the nature of *shAnti*. Similarly you need to have relative cheerfulness, happiness, then only you discover and assimilate that I am *ananda-svarupa*.

How to attain that relative happiness?

For that certain tools we can adopt in our life.

First of all, you can do this introspection. Is it possible for me to remain happy?

Get convinced of the sense of possibility of being happy. Many people think there is no way one can be happy. Then you will definitely not be happy. So first of all ask this question, is it possible to remain cheerful, happy? If the answer is -Yes. Since there are people

who are relatively happy, so it is possible. Then ask yourself - Do I like to be happy? Or do I want to remain fighting, be serious and not be happy. Some people have another psychological problem. They don't think they deserve to be happy. First of all, one has to accept that I deserve to be happy, I like to be happy, I can be happy. This is the first step to get a cheerful disposition in life.

Second thing is - take care of your health. Body is an important means for the pursuit of dharma - duty. We need not become a health freak. But we don't neglect our health. Take care of it not just by medicine, but by 3 things- moderation in food, exercise, regular routine. This means let there be a balance between work and rest. Then only health and happiness are possible. If the health is not okay, one cannot be happy. Generally the health affects the mind. So we should take care of our health.

Next thing we need to be aware that happiness has something to do with my attitude and my response to the situation. My happiness is not so much decided by the situation in my life, but more by how I respond or look upon that situation. So my attitude to everything in my life is a very important factor for relative happiness. Like the attitude of gratitude. People who have this attitude are generally happy people. When you are grateful, you will be a happy person because you will be feeling grateful only when you are thinking of something good that has happened in your life. So more grateful you are, more happy you will be. This was seen in Pujya Swamiji's life. Even a small thing someone has done, he will remember it and express his gratitude whenever he could. Thus gratitude is one of the good attitudes leading to happiness.

Another one is prayerfulness. Pujya Swamiji explains this nicely -prayerfulness is seeing everything is given and that given is not separate from the giver, the Lord. So every object, people, situation I look upon them as given by the Lord and in everything that is given, I can appreciate the presence of the giver, the Lord. This is called prayerfulness through which I remain connected to the Lord. Then whatever action I do, I make it as a worship to the Lord. If we have this attitude, then we are more likely to be happy.

Attitude comes from understanding of certain things. One thing is that facts cannot be changed. What has happened in my life so far is a fact which cannot be changed.

अपरिहार्ये न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि । BGita Ch 2 sl 27

You ought not to grieve over that which cannot be changed.

Facts cannot be changed, facts need to be accepted objectively if not gracefully. Some people hold on to the past. Whatever happened was in the past. It is already over. So let us accept the happenings of the past as a fact and appreciate that facts cannot be changed.

Another thing Pujya Swamiji would emphasize is that don't try to change people to be happy. It means, for your happiness don't depend upon people to change. Generally people

feel that I will be happy if my wife, son, daughter, brother, boss, etc. change. That is a sure way to be unhappy. Give people the freedom to be what they are, if you want to be happy. One more thing needed to be happy is harmony in life. It can be seen at 3 levels -

i) Let there be harmony between my desires. Sometimes we have got opposite desires. I want that maximum people should contact me till late night and next day morning I want to have absorbing meditation. See the contradictions between your desires.

ii) There needs to be harmony between behavior and desire. Your behavior is very rough, but you want people to love you. That will not happen. So make sure that your behavior and desire are in harmony with each other.

iii) Harmony in relationship with others. How to be in harmony with people around you? Have the disposition of friendliness. Somebody said very nicely – “*You get more from your friend than your enemy*”. For having disposition of friendliness, you need to have readiness to let go. Even if you lose some money, it does not matter, but maintain harmony in relationship. Relationship is one of the important factors in having relative happiness.

iv) Earning grace from the Lord is another important factor for happiness. According to sastra, punya alone is responsible for the experience of happiness. How do you earn grace? In two ways - One is by prayer and the other is by reaching-out actions. Prayer can be in the form of puja, parayanam (chanting) or any type of mental meditation. Also share with others in whatever way you can - with money, time and any other resources. All that will earn you grace and with that you will be relatively happy.

The ultimate way to be happy is to discover the fullness of one's nature. That alone is the purpose of human life. Never losing sight of the ultimate purpose of life will make one's life meaningful and happy. So we pray to Bhagavan that may this year 2021 be the year of growth, the year of learning and we pray for everybody in the world. May everybody be happy, healthy and peaceful -

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामया, सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु । मा कश्चित् दुःखभाग्भवेत् ॥

Sarve bhavantu sukhinah sarva santu nirAmaya sarve bhadraNi pashyantu mA kascit dukha bhAgbhavet.

Om Tat Sat. Happy new Year!

*Note: We could not publish the serial articles in this month
newsletter due to non availability of printing space.*

- Editor