

## Year-end retreat at AVG, Saylorsburg, PA, USA

The Year End Retreat 2020 at AVG, PA was extra special, this being the Covid year there were a number of restrictions in place. *Ishwara* taught us the past few months that humans can and should adapt to changing situations and global orders without being attached to one way of doing things.

We leveraged technological advances for online classes. And the generous online attendance both for the 9-week course and the Year End Retreat showed us that AVG is on the right track. In fact many prefer the remote learning to a live setting for various reasons. Even while being in the *gurukulam* physically, many attendees decided to access the sessions online live or recorded, so that there could be social distancing.

Swami Tattvavidananda ji's Year End Retreat on Sat Darshanam of Ramana Maharishi (Chapter 8) along with glimpses of the Valmiki Ramayanam via Sundara Kanda renditions. Morning meditations was followed by evening Satsangs. Daily Sanskrit sessions with Br. Surya ji and Music sessions with Chitra ji were also conducted.

As usual the kitchen team, housing and cleaning personnel, the gardening and landscaping group, along with the grounds management staff did an exemplary job.

After seeing off Swami Tattvavidananda ji who returned to India on Dec 31st, the year 2020 ended beautifully for those at the *gurukulam* with the usual *kalasha pooja* and 1008 times *mantra japa* to Lord Dakshinamurty. Manager Suddhatma ji, Br. Surya ji, and others took turns to lead the Dakshinamurty *moola mantra* which was followed by *abhishekam* and the evening *aarati*. AVG's two resident priests Sri. Ganesan ji and Sri. Ravichandran ji undertook the tough task of chanting mantras with their face masks. At 8.30pm Swami Tattvavidananda ji's recorded *satsang* was aired. At 11.00 pm Sahadev ji and Chitra ji lead *bhajan* sessions and at 11.45 pm Pujya Swamiji lead the chanting of Om Namaha Shivaaya, and at 12.00 am the *gurukulam* welcomed the New Year 2021 with Pizza and Cake, which is another of its hoary traditions.

Jan 1st 2021, after the morning *pooja* and *rudraabhishekam* followed by *sankalpam*

for those who had requested New Year Pooja. The *sankalpam* was followed by New Year Messages by Swami Veditatmananda ji, Swami Tattvavidananda ji, and Pujya Swamiji. Br. Surya ji also spoke, especially about Swami Pratyagbodhananda ji who was missed by everyone. This was followed by the much awaited Pushparchana accompanying the 108 names of Lord Dakshinamurty. Pujya Swamiji's *bhajans* followed.

Each and every staff at Gurukulam contributed their might in making these function lack noferver inspite of Covid19.

- Report by Krishna Kavita

*Krishna Kavita, a student of Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati ji, enjoys writing and teaching Indic language, culture, and thought. She continues her Vedanta study with Acharyas of the AVG parampara.*

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