



# *Arsha Vidya Newsletter*

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## Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, PA, USA



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## 2021 New Year day celebrations at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti

Special abhisekham and puja was performed on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> 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*

## **E-retreat organised by AVG , Anaikatti from Dec 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to Jan 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021.**

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam is committed to impart the vision of rishis through long-term courses and retreats. Due to the pandemic in 2020, residential retreats were not possible. Therefore, it was decided to conduct e-retreats . The first one was in Aug 2020 conducted by Sw Shankaranandaji. Then the second e-retreat was conducted in December by Swami Viditatmanandaji . This was originally planned to be a regular residential retreat, but was converted into an e-retreat. It was made available through live-streaming on our YouTube channel –*Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti*. The response was overwhelming. About 340 participants from all over the world registered for the e-retreat. There were many more who directly viewed our public channel. The students of the 2 year on-going course at AVG, Anaikatti viewed the Upanishad talks live on screen and attended the other classes held at the gurukulam.



It was a unique retreat in many ways. The Upanishad was live-streamed from Ahmedabad and the rest of the classes were live-streamed from Anaikatti, Coimbatore. Also for the entire week, the participants had the opportunity to participate in all the activities live, as if they were at the gurukulam – from morning puja at temple, meditation, other classes, evening puja and satsang at night – about 7 videos a day for one week- total 49 live and re-

corded videos were made available to participants. The audio versions were also available. The New Year special puja and acharya Sw Sadatmanandaji's 2021 New Year message were also a part of the retreat experience. Daily Schedules, texts, bhashyam with translation, several reading materials and daily summaries of the classes were made available to the participants. At the end of this write-up, we share the thoughts of some retreat participants.

The Texts taken at the retreat were –

\*Mandukya Upanisad - agama prakaranam with bhashyam by Sw Veditatmanandaji from Ahmedabad.

\*Kaupina Pacakam and Ch 1 of Ramodanta by Sw Sadatmanandaji at Anaikatti, Coimbatore.

**A brief summary of the Mandukya Upanishad-agama prakaranam** - written by one of the retreaters is given below –

**\* The Upanishad comprises of two sections:**

\* 1<sup>st</sup> Section (mantra 1 to 7) is for Atmavichara - This is predominantly on abhidheya (that which is denoted), Atma.

\* 2<sup>nd</sup> Section (mantra 8 to 12) is for Atmadhyanam –This is predominantly on meditation on abhidhana (name), Omkara.

**\* Analysis of atma is done with Omkara in the following manner -**

\* Om represents all this as the Vacharytha (direct meaning). Om is sarvam (everything), whatever is there, will be there, was there, including that unmanifest cause which is beyond time and called avyakta.

\* This sarvam - all (equated with Om) is Brahman. What is this Brahman ? *Ayam Atma brahma* (mahavakya) – This Atma is Brahman. This Atma has got 4 quarters.

\* Three of the quarters – are sadhana, the means; and the fourth is the sadhya, the end.

**\* But Atma is partless, how can it have quarters ? – Subsequent mantras answers that query by giving the details of the quarters of atma :**

\* Vaishvanarah, the waker is the 1<sup>st</sup> pada, which consists of 7 cosmic limbs and 19 mouths with which it enjoys the gross world. Waker is bahishprajnah, whose consciousness is outward.

\* Taijasa, the dreamer is the 2<sup>nd</sup> pada, which again consists of 7 cosmic limbs and 19 mouths with which it enjoys the subtle world in the dream state. Dreamer is Antahprajnah, whose consciousness is inward.

\* PrAjnah, the sleeper is the 3<sup>rd</sup> pada. The sleeper is the one who does not desire

(no waking state), and does not dream, This is the state of deep sleep in which all objects remain unified, undifferentiated. The sleeper is *prajna-ghanah*, of the nature of dense consciousness, and has predominance of *anandah* - happiness as there is no sorrow in this state. *PrAjna* is the one having the mouth of consciousness, *chetomukhah*, and is said so because the dreamer and waker arise from *PrAjna*. *PrAjna* is the causal state, and dreamer and waker are effects.

\* That *PrAjna* alone is *sarveshwarah*, the ruler of all and is described as *abhinna-nimitta-upAdana-kAraNam* – the intelligent cause which is non-different from the material cause. That *PrAjna* alone is *sarvajna*, knower of all, and that alone is *antaryAmi*, the one dwelling as inner controller. From this alone all beings arise, and in this alone all beings merge.

\* The 4<sup>th</sup> Pada is described by negation of all 3 padas. The 4<sup>th</sup> pada is neither waker, nor dreamer, neither the state in between, nor the sleeper. It is not *prajna* – omniscient identified with the totality nor *aprajna* – insentient. It is not an object of perception or action, nor it is a matter of inference. Thus it is *adrsTam*: cannot be perceived, *avyavaharyam*: not transactable, *agrahyam*: cannot be grasped, it is *alakshanam*: unferrable, *achintayam*: not an object of thinking, *avyapadeshyam*: nor object of words, it is indescribable. When one sees the underlying consistent I, in all the roles, the entire world ceases, and what is left is the silence, the auspiciousness, non-dual: one without the second, that is the 4<sup>th</sup>, that is *turiya Atma*, that is I, the self, that should be known. I am the proof that *Turiya* is, there is the 4<sup>th</sup>. Only when I am the 4<sup>th</sup>, the first 3 and all its characteristics can be negated to leave 'I' alone as this 4<sup>th</sup>, the *Turiya*. So I should stop all the *vyavahaaras* of *hana-upadana* (taking and dropping), stop acquiring anything, just 'Be'. Finally subject is also not there, object is also not there. I should know *turiya Atma* as '*ekatma pratyayasAram*'. *Bhashyakara* explains this - *turiya* should be traced by the one invariable cognition that is the one self which exists in all the three states or it may mean that the invariable cognition is the means for knowing *turiya atma*.

\* *uttama adhikAri* (fully qualified seeker) directly and intimately knows the *Turiya* as the self by *sravanam* and contemplation upon the *Turiya* not as an object, but as the very self.

\* *madhyama adhikAri* (moderately qualified seeker) knows the *Turiya* as *Atma* through its appreciation as witness and as *adhishThanam* (the truth of all).

\* For *manda adhikAri* (less qualified seeker), for those who do not gain knowledge through both these ways, *shruti* prescribes *Om kara dhyanam* (meditation on *Om kara*) which forms the subject matter of the second section.

*Om* has 4 matras which are equated to the 4 padas (quarters) of *Atma*, Each *matra* (letter) represents the corresponding pada. 1<sup>st</sup> *matra*, *A-kara* represents waker, 2<sup>nd</sup> *matra* *U-kara* represents dreamer, and 3<sup>rd</sup> *matra* *M-kara* represents sleeper. The 4<sup>th</sup> is *amAtra* which is

silence, which represents Turiya. Thus omkara is all-inclusive.

\* So the entire Upanisad teaches these equations :

1. Om is Sarvam
2. Sarvam is Brahman
3. Brahman is Atma
4. Atma has 4 quarters: First 3 quarters are the means, 4<sup>th</sup> is the end and I am the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter.
5. That Atma is Om.
6. Om has 4 matras – A-kara, U-kara, M-kara representing waker, dreamer and sleeper respectively, 4<sup>th</sup> is silence, which represents the Turiya.

\* In mantra 1 to 7, the prakriya of adhyAropa-apavAda ( the model of superimposition and negation) was used, where one has to know the status of being waker, dreamer, sleeper as mithya. These have to be negated to know the Turiya as I. Waker, Dreamer, Sleeper fall in the category of cause-effect. I am Turiya, beyond cause-effect, there is no causality in me, the Turiya.

#### **Sharing some write-ups by the participants to the E-retreat –**

I would like to express my immense gratitude for this e-retreat. First of all I want to thank acharyaji for providing us such solid bases of vedantic teaching, without which I wouldn't have benefitted as much as I did from these classes. Mandukya Upanishad is one of the most profound Upanishads. It's like a strong medicine of reality taken in one shot. Therefore, I want to express my deep gratitude to Sw Vidadatmanandji, for giving his blessings in the form of these classes. It's inspiring to see how intimate swamiji is with shastra and the vision, and how effortless the teaching flows from him. My humble pranams to swamiji. My gratitude to Pujya Swamji, to the parampara and Isvara that this e-retreat could happen and bless us all. Thank you. **Maline, Brazil, 2yr course student.**

By the grace of Isvara, we were blessed with this opportunity of listening to the teaching of Mandukyopanishad from Sw Vidadatmanandaji presented with so much clarity. Initially, I had a little difficulty coping with the class due to my limited exposure to the subject matter, language, and the culture in general. But by the end of the retreat, by the grace of our archaryaji and kind support from fellow students, swamiji's teaching started sinking in and I started making connections with the teaching received. Among many precious teachings Swamiji imparted to us, the one which left an impression was swamiji words – *“Don't try to grasp, perceive, or experience Brahman. When these effort cease, Brahman becomes evident. When both words and word meanings are dropped, then one appreciates there is no division between knower and known.”* Thinking about this has led me to another level of understanding about the truth. Thank you swamiji, for guiding us to more and more profound and subtle thinking. My sincere gratitude to our acharyaji and all those who made the retreat experience possible. **Keiko, Japan, 2 yr course student.**

On behalf of all the students, I pay respects to our guru Sw Sadatmanandaji for giving us this great opportunity. The retreat reminded me of my swimming lessons early in life, After learning to swim confidently at the shallow end, my teacher threw me into the deep end and then I realized that I still need to learn more. The retreat text - Mandukya Upanishad is profound. Even though it felt like we were thrown into the deep end of Vedanta, we were thankful to have Sw Vidadatmanandaji guiding us. My biggest take-away from the retreat is how swamiji articulated the essence of the Upanishad into simple equations. Einstein solved equations to understand relativity. However, our attempt will be to “ resolve” the equations presented by Swamiji from the Upanishad and arrive at the absolute truth – “**I am Turiya**”. **Vinay Lakshman - Chennai, Guest student .**

My gratitude to Pujya Swami Vidadatmanandaji. I am a follower of Vishistadvaita but had many doubts in my mind as presently they preach many things unacceptable to my mind. Hence, I took up this e-retreat. Earlier I have listened to Swami Ramkrishnananda’s discourses on Chatusutri. The retreat helped me to get clarity on meditation and many of my doubts simply vanished by understanding advaita which is the base of Vishistadvaita. I am very much thankful to Swamiji for his efforts for guiding mumukshus like me to understand liberation through self-knowledge. I am also very much thankful to the organisers for conducting this e-retreat. Lastly, namaskaram from the depth of the heart of a jignasu for introducing me to advaita philosophy. Thanks a lot again to Swamiji. **Dhanji Thadoda, Gujarat, email received from e-retreater.**

Swamiji pranam! We have heard Pujya Swamiji say that, even a villager in this soil of Bharat knows “सब भगवान् है! (everything is Isvara).The Arsha Vidya Parampara conveys this so effortlessly to those battling minds and for those in eternal search of the infallible, completely unaware that “I am already free”. No matter how many times one hears this, the pangs of avidya (ignorance) and vasanas (impressions) are so consuming (thanks to one’s past karma), this ultimate reality doesn’t rest on this upadhi.

2020 ! The landmark year of the pandemic saw a lot of AVG Gurus’ “come to my home” and teach me personally online ! AVG, Annaikatti’s e-retreat announcement brought the divine combination of Sw Vidadatmanandaji and Mandukya Upanishad for a week 3 times a day. The minutest detail with which every mantra starting from the mangalakaranam was handled by Swamiji deftly and yet very simply, awed me! By knowing Omkara one can know the self, this connection between Omkara and Atma was well crystallized. That the Mandukya Upanishad with karika is called prakaranam took me by surprise. This very fine knowledge and the nuances touched on by Swami Vidadatanandaji has manifolded the respect for Bhashyakara and Tikkakara whose intellects were of such a lofty quality. Turiyam effortlessly blended with the three avasthas, bringing to awareness that nothing stands apart from me, turiyam. The search for the infallible ends for me with 2020. Sw Vidadatmanandaji has prepared me well for the grand opening of a brand new year, by ex-

posing the “seed - sprout” relationship. With the grace of Bhagavan and acharya, being able to appreciate the world to be really not there, moving away from being krpana (small-minded), and raising the quality of the intellect bhagavan has already bestowed, is the journey hereon! Thank you is a very small expression to the AVG teams in Annaikatti and Ahmedabad for such a meticulous planning, relay and backend work! I have no regrets or complaints on corona virus! **Radhika Srinivas, Coimbatore, e-retreater.**

Sri Gurubhyo Nama: Although the Vedanta retreats may not be a new concept, the recently concluded E-retreat on Mandkya Upanishad, is one of the best ways to address present day challenges and the way forward using technology in the current times that we live in. We remember one of the Brahmachari's in our class used to say, Pujya Swamiji used to spend about an hour each week during his visit to US during the 90's, on conference calls on answering questions and clarifying doubts of many aspirants, who were located various parts of the America, who couldn't be physically present at the Saylorburg ashram for the classes.

Taking advantage of the best of the technology, having a live class, that is being attended by at least over 350 participants who are situated in various parts of the globe is definitely a huge step towards taking/ bringing the teaching to as many people as possible from wonderful teachers like Swami Veditamandaji who could be delivering the teaching from his ashram. Live teaching is a very important element in the pramana vichara as the teacher is the one who employs or wields the pramana by careful handling of the words of the Sruti and uses different methods in the sampradaya to clearly unfold the vision of the Sruti. Since the communication is through lakshana vakyas, it's very important for the student to have the capacity to stay with/hold on to a particular topic and look at it from different standpoints. A live class is very effective to make the teaching come alive, which is key in effective sravanam. As Pujya Swamiji used to say, handling the words while teaching Vedanta, holds a great impact on students during the time of learning by students. This to a greater extent is achieved through the live streaming of the teaching including Satsang with Q&A on the topic that is being taught. This helps in mananam and nidhidhyasana.

The necessity of live teaching is equally emphasized by Swami Bharathi Theertha, the Sringeri Acharya. When Acharya had visited the Gurukulam during 2012 and spoke in our class regarding the sampradaya methods in teaching and the need of the live Guru, which signifies the importance of learning the shastra from a live guru. Hence it certainly holds importance that livestreaming of classes of Acharyas like Swami Veditatmandaji that create such an appropriate environment for effective study of the Shastra.

Although one of the meaning of Upanishad does mean “Upa Sameepe” sitting near/close

to a Guru, through the live streaming of classes using the technology does adequately address the meaning of the word Upanishad. Personally, speaking the retreat literally has put us back on old discipline of life at gurukulam that we used to have during our long-term course at the Gurukulam with Pujya Swamiji, starting the day with the abhishekham, chanting and puja at the temple, followed by the meditation session, 3 Vedanta classes and the Satsang has really helped us to get back to the gurukulam life after almost 7 years. Hence we look forward for many more such E-retreats in future, that would actually help people to stay put where they are but still get the advantage and benefit of live teaching from best acharyas from the Parampara. **Sreekanth and Sarada, Kerala**

*Om Tat Sat*

### **Swami Dayananda Educational Trust offer to Students of Vedanta**

Vedanta students recommended by Senior Arsha Vidya Acaryas are invited to use the archive material available at Jnana Pravaha, the memorial of Pujya Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Manjakkudi. Students are welcome to stay for a period of 2 weeks at a time. Suitable Accommodation and food facilities will be provided at Manjakkudi to enable the students to devote entirely listening to a particular text or texts or work on it.

#### **Swami Dayananda Digital Archive:**

The Swami Dayananda Digital Archive includes Pujya Swamiji's class room material of four three year courses - 1990, 1995, 2002 and 2010. In addition the archive has Swamiji's public talks, meditations, and more. It is a unique facility that allows for in-depth research and study of Pujya Swamiji's teaching and teaching methodology.

#### **Study Centre:**

The Archives are accessed through Desktop computers, four of them are installed. The study centre application is designed to guide students find the contents and gives options for study depending on their background, interest and the time available for their study. Hard copies of the books by Pujya Swamiji are also available for reference, along with other original Vedantic Sanskrit texts, Sanskrit-English dictionaries, and more.

The facility will be available for students from April 14, 2021. It is located in the centre of the village and is exclusive, quiet, secure and provides ambience for study, includes a Meditation Hall also. The village has a school, College and two temples around the facility for the student to go around during his/her leisure hours.

*This page is sponsored by **Sri Hariharan and Smt. Meena Hariharan,***

*C40 Vanprastha, Kasturi Naicken Palayam, Vadvalli Post, Coimbatore - 641 041*

## Swami Pratyagbodhananda Saraswati

A Tribute By V.Swaminathan <sup>1</sup>

**Birth: October 20, 1950    Sannyāsa: March 2, 1992    Samādhi: September 20, 2020**

Swami Pratyagbodhananda Saraswati, a disciple of Pūjya Swami Dayananda Saraswati of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, attained *samādhi* on Sept 20, 2020. He was a simple *sadhu*, truly fitting the definition of the word, *para kāryam sādhnōti iti sādhuḥ*. His simplicity was devoid of any pretense and it came to him naturally. He was most endearing to whosoever came into contact with him. Not only he had no boundaries for love, but his presence also had such a dynamism that others dissolved their boundaries before him. His love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, his love for Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, his love for his teachers - Pūjya Swami Dayanandaji, Pūjya Swami Chinmayanandaji, and Pūjya Swami Akhaṇḍānanda Maharaji, permeated every pore of his personality. That unifying Guru *bhakti* came through splendidly in his discourses and inspired the audience.



Swami Pratyagbodhananda Saraswati, ‘Swami P’ as he was affectionately referred to by his students and devotees, adopted a lifestyle of endearment and sharing, commensurate with his personality. He was a *maitraḥ*<sup>2</sup>, one had the disposition of a friend, a *karuṇaḥ*, one who was compassionate, towards all who came into contact with him. Some of the following eulogies by his students<sup>3</sup> assert to the traits of Swami P:

“He was a gregarious person, always smiling and greeting everybody”,

<sup>1</sup> State College, Pennsylvania, USA.

<sup>2</sup> अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च *adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānām maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca* | Bhagavad Gītā, 12:13

<sup>3</sup> P.K. Govind, Ashok, Rupa, Sundar, Bhavani & Mouli, respectively.

“He was always very humorous while conveying the deeper significance of Advaita Vedanta”,

“He was always so approachable, compassionate to everyone with a smile on his face”,

“I always enjoyed and appreciated his humor, affable nature and insightful lectures”,

“We will always remember his unique style of humor and his remarkable exposition of Bhāgavatam”.

Swami P’s teaching style was simple and yet profound. His communication method was always direct and imbued with an abundance of humor. The humor in fact, broke the barrier of timidity in the listener and made him/her at ease in tuning oneself to the subtleties of the subject matter. He was always at ease with himself and that ‘self-comfort’ lightened a person in his presence. This was a testament to Pūjya Swami Dayanandaji’s dictum that one should be ‘lightened’ before becoming ‘enlightened’. Whenever Swami P met a newcomer to the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam in Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania, his priority would be one of unrestrained welcome without any judgement. He amicability was unabashed. His congeniality was contagious. By his actions he would inspire the newcomer to come back to the Gurukulam, enroll in a family camp, join or start a Pūjya Swami Dayanandaji’s Bhagavad Gītā home study program. Thanks to Swamiji, many became regular attendees of the classes in the Gurukulam. He was tireless in promoting the Gurukulam’s outreach program and travelled to far and near places to give a *satsangas*, Vedantic talks, conduct Bhāgavata *Saptāhas*, initiate Bhagavad Gītā home study programs or promote Vedic Heritage Programs for children. Numerous Gītā home study groups were formed by his outreach and Swamiji would invariably reach out to the different groups during his annual visits to Saylorsburg and inquire about their progress. By his committed outreach Swami P was an *āpta* for numerous spiritual seekers.

Swamiji summarized karma yoga in one phrase, “be prepared for surprises in life”. He maintained that if one has a sense of humor, then ‘common’ sense will prevail. This enduring philosophy defined his life till the day of his *samādhi*. Swamiji’s teaching style was in perfect alignment and harmony with that of his teacher, Swami Dayanandaji. Before teaching the weekend Gītā classes at the Gurukulam in Saylorsburg, he would refer without fail to Pūjya Swami Dayanandaji’s Bhagavad Gītā home study program. He revered Pūjya Swamiji’s method of communication of the vision of the *śāstras* and often pointed out to his audience the inimitability of Pūjya Swamiji’s teaching style. An insightful feature of Swami P’s unfoldment of Vedantic vision was his use of precise definitions of the Vedantic technical words. I was particularly inspired by this approach since knowing the etymology of the words helped to apprehend their meanings without the reliance on inadequate English translations.

Madhusūdana Sarasvati, one of the greatest exponents of Advaita philosophy, in his commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā, known as *Gūḍhartha-dīpikā*, added a few verses of his own. In introducing Chapter 13, Madhusūdana writes:

ध्यानाभ्यासवशीकृतेन मनसा तन्निर्गुणं निष्क्रियं ज्योतिः  
किंचन योगिनो यदि परं पश्यन्ति पश्यन्तु ते ।  
अस्माकं तु तदेव लोचनचमत्काराय भूयाच्चिरं  
कालिन्दीपुलिनोदरे किमपि यन्नीलं महो धावति ॥

*dhyānābhyāsavaśīkṛtēna manasā tannirguṇaṁ niṣkriyaṁ jyōtiḥ  
kimcana yōginō yadi paraṁ paśyanti paśyantu tē ।  
asmākaṁ tu tadēva lōcanacamatkāraya bhūyāccirāṁ  
kālindīpulinōdarē kimapi yannīlaṁ mahō dhāvati ॥*

“If the yogis, with their minds which have been brought under control through the practice of meditation, see some such transcendental light that is without qualities and action, let them see! But, for filling our eyes with astonishment, let there be forever that indescribable blue light which runs about hither and thither on the sands of Kālindī (Yamunā)”<sup>4</sup>.

This verse epitomizes Swami P’s disposition towards Kṛṣṇa which was amply evinced in his discourses on Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. The Kṛṣṇa who played on the sands of Kālindī came alive when Swamiji narrated the stories from the episodes described in the *Daśama Skandha* of Bhāgavatam relating Kṛṣṇa’s *Gōkula līlā* or *Brindāvana līlā*. Swamiji was an adept story teller and listeners felt transported to *Gōkula* with his *vācika abhinaya*. He will invariably recollect how his guru, Pūjya Swami Akhaṇḍānanda Maharaji, would relish the bhāgavata *kathā*. Swami P had a heightened *rasānubhava* which he never failed to pass on to his listeners. He would create an ambience of devotion with the hosts performing a *ṣōḍaśōpacāra pūjā* to a superbly decorated *pratimā* of Śrī Rādhākṛṣṇa before the *kathā*. Swamiji would lead the singing of “*vandē gōpālam*” with the devotees joining him during the *maṅgala dīpārādhana*. From beginning to end everyone’s heart would be filled with Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

There is a familiar prayer which says:

अनायासेन मरणं विनादैन्येन जीवनं देहि मे कृपया शम्भो त्वयि भक्तिं अचञ्चलां ॥  
*anāyāsena maraṇaṁ vinādainyena jīvanaṁ dehi me kṛpayā śambho tvayi bhaktiṁ  
acañcalāṁ ॥*

The devotee asks the Lord to bless him/her with an unwavering devotion such that living is free of dependence and death is effortless. The suddenness of Swamiji’s end seems perhaps like this devotee’s wish. He was uttering the name of Śrī Rāma till his last conscious moment. As Swami Tattvavidanandaji remarked in Swami P’s eulogy, the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam that was Swamiji’s constant companion protected him till the end. It may be also that Swamiji had some kind of a premonition. On that day of September 20, 2020, which

<sup>4</sup> Madhusūdana Sarasvatī’s *Gūḍhartha-dīpikā* – Commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā; translated by Swami Gambhirananda, Advaita Ashrama Publications, Calcutta, India, 2000.

was the day of the 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Saylorsburg *aśram*, Swami P spoke about his Gurus, his parents, his life before taking the *sannyāsa*, the day Pūjya Swami Dayanan-daji's gave him the *sannyāsa dīkṣā* for which his parents had come from Surat and how grateful he was for the blessings he had received from the Lord, his parents and Gurus.

It would appear that Swami P's anniversary address was his parting message. Swamiji quoted two verses of Gokarna's *upadeśa* to his father Ātmadeva from the Bhāgavata *mā-hātmya*.

देहो ऽस्थि-मांस-रुधिरं ऽभिमतिं त्यज त्वं	<i>deho 'sthi-māṃsa-rudhire 'bhimatiṃ tyaja tvam</i>
जायासुतादिषु सदा ममतां विमुञ्च ।	<i>jāyāsutādiṣu sadā mamatāṃ vimuñca  </i>
पश्यानिशं जगद् इदं क्षण-भङ्ग-निष्ठं	<i>paśyāniśaṃ jagad idaṃ kṣaṇa-bhaṅga-niṣṭhaṃ</i>
वैराग्य-राग-रसिको भव भक्ति-निष्ठः	<i>vairāgya-rāga-rasiko bhava bhakti-niṣṭ</i>
धर्मं भजस्व सततं त्यज लोक-धर्मान्	<i>dharmaṃ bhajasva satataṃ tyaja loka-dharmān</i>
सेवस्व साधु-पुरुषाज् जहि काम-तृष्णाम्	<i>sevasva sādhu-puruṣāñ jahi kāma-trṣṇām</i>
अन्यस्य दोष-गुण-चिन्तनम् आशु मुक्त्वा	<i>anyasya doṣa-guṇa-cintanam āśu muktvā</i>
सेवा-कथा-रसम् अहो नितराम् पिब त्वम्	<i>sevā-kathā-rasam aho nitarām piba tvam</i>

Give up the identification with the body which is nothing but a collection of flesh, bones and blood. Give up the sense of 'mine' with reference to the spouse, sons etc. May you recognize that the world is ephemeral. Be objective. Become one who takes delight in *bhakti* and is abiding in it.

Seek *dharma* (which is Lord's form) always and give up worldly activities. Seek the company of wise people and give up the binding desires. Give up deliberating on the faults and virtues of others. May you always partake the *rasānubhava* of the stories of Bhagavān.

The poignancy of the message is striking, in retrospect, considering that later that day Swamiji attained *samādhi*.

On a personal note, Swami P was very dear to our family. In the early 90's I received the first teaching from Swamiji when he taught me the meaning of the sixteenth verse from the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā<sup>5</sup>. When we moved into our new home in 1997, Swamiji did a Bhāgavata *saptāha*. He initiated for my wife the *vasanta navarātra pūjā*. He conducted numerous Vedanta and Śrīmad Bhāgavata *satsangas* at our home. He graced the occasion of our daughter's wedding and blessed the couple. We met him in Coimbatore in February 2020 and because of the pandemic situation did not have a chance to see him when he was at Saylorsburg. Swamiji was ready to travel to State College, PA to see us before he was scheduled to leave for India after the Gurukulam's anniversary. We took the

<sup>5</sup> नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः | *nāsatō vidyatē bhāvō nābhāvō vidyatē sataḥ |*

उभयोरपि दृष्टो'न्तस्त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः || *ubhayōrapi drṣṭō'ntastvanayōstattvadarśibhiḥ ||*

permission to visit the Gurukulam and went to see Swamiji on Friday, Sept 11, 2020. We had tea with him and Swamiji was telling us about the uniqueness of the interpretation of some of the Muṇḍakōpaniṣat *mantras* by Pūjya Swamiji. Swamiji then showed me his copy of the Muṇḍaka *bhāṣyam* with the commentary of Paṇḍita Śrīdharaśāstrī. I said to Swamiji that I was not aware of the commentator and immediately Swamiji gave me his copy and added that the Śrīdharaśāstrī's commentaries on the Upaniṣats are very insightful. I will forever cherish Swamiji's parting gift. We are ever grateful to Swamiji for his warmth, affection and teachings.

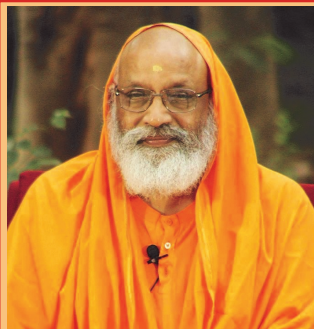
*Om Tat Sat*

### श्री प्रत्यग्बोधानन्द सरस्वति श्रद्धाञ्जलिः

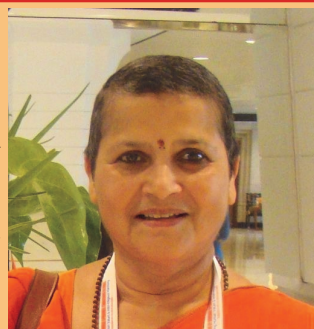
Written by Shankar Sundareshan, Cherry Hill, New Jersey, USA.

अखण्डश्रीदयानन्द गुरुभिः शिक्षयितारम् ।  
स्वामि प्रत्यग्बोधानन्द सरस्वतिनं स्मरामि । ।  
हास्यान्तर्गत वेदान्त तत्त्वोपदेश प्रवीणम् ।  
स्वामि प्रत्यग्बोधानन्द सरस्वतिनं स्मरामि । ।  
भागवतामृते मज्जन् श्रोतृभक्ति सुदोहकम् ।  
स्वामि प्रत्यग्बोधानन्द सरस्वतिनं स्मरामि । ।  
सौलभ्य समुपसृष्टं सुखमेलन शालिनम् ।  
स्वामि प्रत्यग्बोधानन्द सरस्वतिनं स्मरामि । ।  
सदा प्रसन्न भावेन आश्रित शिष्य दायकम् ।  
स्वामि प्रत्यग्बोधानन्द सरस्वतिनं स्मरामि । ।  
विश्वमङ्गल प्रापकम् शिष्यजन सुसेवितम् ।  
स्वामि प्रत्यग्बोधानन्द सरस्वतिनं स्मरामि । ।  
आर्षविद्यागुरुकुल आचार्यावलि राजितम् ।  
स्वामि प्रत्यग्बोधानन्द सरस्वतिनं स्मरामि । ।  
गुरुसेवा धुरन्धरं गुर्वाज्ञा परिपालकम् ।  
हृदयांबुजे संस्थाप्य प्रणमामि यतिवरम् । ।

**5th Swami Dayananda Saraswati Memorial Lectures**  
**11th Indological Conference / Webinar**  
**organised by Arsha Vidya Vikas Kendra 6th-7th March 2021**



His Holiness Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati Ji (1930-2015) (Padma Bhushan 2016) had touched the lives of many scholars, intellectuals, and freethinkers in India and abroad with his unfoldment of the Vedanta and allied scriptures/literature. AVVK being a small link in continuing that *parampara* is organising the **5th Swami**



**Dayananda Saraswati Memorial Lectures** at the international level in **Bhubaneswar, Odisha**, on various Indological topics, inviting scholars to participate, especially those who have been associated with Pujya Swamiji's work.

### Topics

1) Vedas, 2) Vedangas, 3) Upavedas, 4) Upanishads, 5) Bhagavadgita, 6) Brahmasutra, 7) Epics - Ramayana and Mahabharata 8) Puranas, 9) Women in India, 10) Sanskrit Literature, 11) Dharma-sastras, 12) Indian Philosophical Systems, 13) Buddhism, 14) Aurobindo Philosophy, 15) Essential of Vedanta, 16) Vedanta and some Contemporary Issues, 17) Vaishnavism 18) Indian Hymnology, 19) Philology 20) Katha Sahitya, 21) Bhakti Movement, 22) Religious/Philosophical Literature

### Participation details

Faculties of the Universities, Research Scholars, Independent Researchers, Scholars, Authors are invited to participate in the Conference.

### Submission of Abstract

Abstracts not exceeding 500 words along with Registration Form may be sent by email only to [atmaprajna@gmail.com](mailto:atmaprajna@gmail.com) to reach by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021. Link for the webinar will be intimated in due course.

### Submission of Final Paper

The final paper in around 3,000 words (around ten A4 pages) may be sent by 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021 by email to [atmaprajna@gmail.com](mailto:atmaprajna@gmail.com). The hard copy should be delivered personally at the venue in Panthanivas, Bhubaneswar.

### Venue

**Panthanivas**  
**Lewis Road**  
**Bhubaneswar -751 014**  
**ODISHA**

### Director of the Conference

**Swamini Atmaprajnananda Saraswati**  
Founder Acaryā, Arsha Vidya Vikas Kendra  
e-mail - [atmaprajna@gmail.com](mailto:atmaprajna@gmail.com)  
website - [www.arshavidya.net](http://www.arshavidya.net)

**4<sup>th</sup> Swami Dayananda Saraswati Memorial Lectures  
(10th Indological Conference)  
organized by Arsha Vidya Vikas Kendra, Bhubaneswar**

Arsha Vidya Vikas Kendra, Bhubaneswar organized the fourth **Swami Dayananda Saraswati Memorial Lectures** in Dayananda Ashram, Rishikesh from 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

Eleven speakers presented eleven scholarly papers on the Vedas, Vedanga (astronomy), Sanskrit Literature, Indian Philosophical systems (Navya Nyaya, Tarka, Yoga), Vedanta, Sri Aurobindo Philosophy, the role of media in spirituality.

Questions raised by the learned audience were answered by the speakers as well as discussed by other speakers after the presentation.

The Conference was convened and directed by Swamini Atmaprajnananda Saraswati. Mrs. Sanghamitra Mohanty was the Organising Secretary.



**The Speakers**

## The Speakers - 4<sup>th</sup> Swami Dayananda Saraswati Memorial Lectures - Feb 2020



Spirituality and Media - by  
Narayani Ganesh



The Psycho-spiritual Interpretation of  
the Vedas - by Dr. Anuradha Choudry



Swami Vivekananda's Practical  
Vedanta - by Dr. Priya Aiyda.



Śrīharṣa and Navya Nyāya –  
by Er. Partha Bandopadhyay



Kaāla-Śiva; Consciousness Of  
Cosmic Time - by Rupa Bhaty



Kauṭilya's Rajadharma  
- by Raghava Krishna A.



Alaṅkāras in Bhagavadgītā - by  
Ātmajñāna Saraswati



Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo  
- by Sraddhalu Ranade



The Philosophy of Yoga  
- by Sanghamitra Mohanty



Tarkamatakhandanam  
- by R S Vaidyanathan



Physical, Mental, Emotional & Spirit-  
ual effects of Yoga - by Yogi Gopal



Dr. Ileana Citaristi (Padma Shri  
2006) presented Odissi Dance

## VEDIC WISDOM FESTIVAL



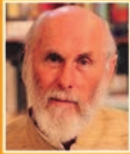
Swami  
Brahmadevananda Saraswati  
Festival Founder



Swamini  
Brahmaprajnananda  
Festival Founder



Pujyasri  
Omkarananda  
Mahaswamigal



Pandit  
Vamadeva Shastri  
(David Frawley)



Acharya  
Vishvanatha  
(Jonas Masetti)



Ishwarya  
Chaitanya



Dr. Parthasarathy. R

In the third year of the Vedic Wisdom Festival held on 5th and 6th December 2020, organized by the Arsha Vidya Foundation, Mumbai, spiritual masters from across the world shared the richness of Vedic Wisdom and allied knowledge for our well-being for an audience of over 300. The festival being virtual this year had both monks as well as householder Vedanta teachers who were disciples of Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

sharing insights on principles of dharma for a successful life, health and healing through Ayurveda, recognizing our sacredness and interconnectedness, why we should seek Vedic wisdom, how dance is devotion, how Hinduism can pave the way forward and much more. The festival was inaugurated by the founders, Swami Brahmadevananda Saraswati by lighting of the lamp and Swamini Brahmaprajnanada Saraswati by chanting the inaugural prayer.

Pujyasri Omkarananda Mahaswamigal speaking on “the timeless framework of dharma for lasting happiness” said that according to Advaita Vedanta everlasting happiness is our own nature but because of self ignorance we fail to know this and we search it outside through *artha* and *kāma*. But without dharma we cannot enjoy material or sense pleasures. Quoting the Mahā Nārāyana Upanishad, Swamigal said dharma will give peace of mind and remove all our wrong deeds. Further he gave a comprehensive framework on dharma which includes rituals, responsibilities, reverential attitudes towards everything around us, the six important values we need to counter the tendencies which are against our own peace and happiness.

Dr Parthasarathy R, practicing Ayurveda Vaidya presented the AyurVedic Wisdom that we can practise to enjoy a healthy life and enhance our state of our wellbeing. He masterfully wove the themes of how Ayurveda for wellbeing helps us to live a dharma so as to pursue moksha, in time. Ayurveda, a discipline of knowledge for longevity says that every single disease starts with a manodoṣa like rāga dvesa ādi, whatever be the disease it first has impairment at the level of the mind and then affects the body. When it comes to the disturbances at the level of the mind, the solution given is *ātmajñānam*; self-knowledge

which is gained by studying Vedanta. In the treatment at the level of body the vaidya uses his logic to prescribe medicines or suggestions, to improve the *sattva* of the individual and treatment using mantras, homas etc. We need to have arogyam to attain the four puruṣārthas, human goals. He walked the participants through the *dinacharya*, the different things to be done during the entire day and dispelled many myths about modern lifestyle and eating habits.

Swamini Brahmaprajnananda, the founder of the festival unfolded the need for breaking unhealthy patterns by thinking clearly and feeling deeply. Quoting from the Amritabindu Upanishad, Swaminiji said, ‘*manah eva manushyanaam bandhamokśakāranayoh*’, the mind alone is the cause of bondage or liberation.” If we have clarity then we make right decisions and choices irrespective of how life unfolds. So if we have to travel this journey then our relationship with the mind undergoes these 3 stages. Stage-1) My mind is a problem and I want to master it. Stage-2) Mind is the inner instrument, it is a glory of Īśvara. If I can use my mind as an instrument then, Stage-3) I am free from the conditions of my mind and able to see clearly what the śāstra reveals – *Sarvam khalu idam Brahman*. We first align our pratibhasika satta to vyaavaharika satta by moving from subjectivity to objectivity and aligning *jiva srsti* to *Isvara srsti*. Swaminiji spoke of ten ways of thinking which cause anxiety, sadness, helplessness and how easy it is to move to functional reality to bring about a lot of gratitude, peace, satisfaction and contentment. Swaminiji then led the participants to a quick meditation and later with the help of Zoom breakout rooms participants got to share their understanding.

Pandit Vamadeva Shastri (Dr. David Frawley), Director of American Institute of Vedic studies was not able to personally address the gathering online, but was kind enough to share 3 videos on his subject “Wisdom of the Hindu tradition (and clash of Hindu civilizations).” Post this Swami Brahmavidananda presented his thoughts by briefly explaining how the environment influences a civilization. When an aggressive civilization clashed with an open, tolerant civilization in India, people were too shocked to react because it is a culture of ‘*atithi devo bhava*’. The insiders more than the outsiders really betrayed and broke India. These are historical facts and attempts to break India is continuing even today. So what do we do about this? Individually we can learn and be proud of our own heritage. We can read books by Pandit Vamadeva Shastri, Rajiv Malhotra, listen to videos by J Sai Deepak and others. Study the śāstra in depth from traditional Gurus so that we command the authority of knowledge. Let us become strong and knowledgeable enough to know what it really means to be a Hindu.

Swami Brahmavidananda, the founder of the festival spoke on the purpose of Vedic Wisdom. Universally, the human being is self conscious and self aware. We are not happy and acceptable of the self we are aware of. There is an attempt from the part of the human being irrespective of the culture and civilization for two main pursuits which is classified in the Vedic wisdom as *artha* and *kāma*. But unless there is the base of dharma we are not able to fulfill our *artha* and *kāma*. When we have achieved certain degree of success then the question comes up, “What is the purpose of life?” The Upanishad makes a statement,

“*ātmanastu kamāya sarvam priyam bhavati*”; everything I want is just so that I am happy and free from lack and insecurities. But the pursuits - dharma, artha and kāma do not free us from the sense of limitation nor can we be comfortable with the sense of limitation. The solution for this is presented in the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gītā as mokṣa, freedom from the sense of limitation, the ultimate puruṣārtha in life and that is the purpose of Vedic Wisdom.

Ishwarya Chaitanya, Bharatnatyam dancer and Yoga teacher took all the participants on a journey through the wonderful dance form of Bharatnatyam to devotion. Speaking to the participants she said, dance has all aspects of sādhana. This world is bhava-sāgara with tumultuous emotions and the dance joins all the emotions into one. The dance has two aspects of devotion, one is devotion to the art form and second is you see the lord as the art. Ishwarya then beautifully presented “*Hanumanta Deva Namō*” written by Saint Purandaradasa glorifying the unique devotion of Hanuman to Lord Rama. The second “*Jagadodhārana*” also a Purandaradasa kriti, which described the love between Yashoda and Krishna depicting the contrast of Lord Narayana and baby Krishna very beautifully. The last piece was “*Bho Shambo*” composed by Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati ji, which is a delight to every dancer to manifest various forms of Shiva.

Acharya Vishvanatha (Jonas Masetti) a traditional Vedanta teacher from Brazil enlightened us on an interesting topic, Mokṣa and Success – Can the twain meet? Often a *grahastha* wonders how this Vedic wisdom fits in his life since s/he has family responsibilities, a job, so many needs to be addressed and it seems like this knowledge needs time and effort. If we want to be on this spiritual path and at the same time cope with worldly pursuits we need to have an open mind because what is said in the śāstra can be challenging and definitely needs to be studied under a competent guru. We need to be passionate and have devotion towards what we do, be skillful and objective and use time wisely depending on our priorities and see ourselves as accomplished by imbibing the values mentioned in the Bhagavad Gītā which is the secret behind a successful worldly life.

The last session was a discussion on “Hinduism and the Idea of India” with the panelists Swami Brahmanidananda and Mr. Mukund Padmanabhan, Ex-editor of the Hindu and the moderator being Mr. Suresh Balakrishnan. The discussion kicked off by the opening remarks of Mukundji about the Idea of India - we are a modern-nation state superimposed on an ancient and a great civilization, while no one can deny that this land was one time a cradle of Hinduism. Today, any idea of India cannot be defined by Hinduism alone. We need to balance both being modern and ancient civilization. We don’t have a sense of identity of being Indian. Further can we claim to be secular? Mukundji’s views were that we would be in a better place if we adopted a harder notion of secularism which kept all religions off from the functioning of the state but at the same time from the religious side is to provide a certain degree of autonomy unless of course it violates fundamental constitutional principles. Swamiji put forward his thoughts by saying in the olden times there were Raja-gurus to handle any ethical issues. There was never a real need in India to bring in that type of secularism. Autonomy has to be given equally to all religions. Moving ahead because of so

many years of minority appeasement are we swinging the other way? Is Hinduism slowly converting into Hindutva? Mukundji's views were the term Hindutva in political discourse has acquired a meaning that stands for aggressive religious based nationalism. We need to at least acknowledge that a term like this could worry others living in a country where there is a large minority. Then the follow up question was, is this aggression justified? Hindus being the majority are not even given a prominence of a minority. Mukundji agreed that we are a majority with a minority complex. He acknowledged that this feeling exists and this gives rise to expressions like 'lets reclaim what we have lost'. He did not believe in the idea of reclaiming anything. The task should be getting on ahead rather than harping on the past. We need to honestly acknowledge the things happened in the past but the people who are living today are not responsible for what has happened in the past. To this Swamiji responded saying Sanskrit version of Hinduism is Hindutva; is the status or qualities about being a Hindu. We are ready to move on but the problem here is we need to acknowledge the past and then move on. Ever since independence until the recent Supreme Court judgment, there never has been an acknowledgement of the destruction that was brought in India by foreign invasion. Where is the acknowledgement of the past where Hindus have suffered? How can we move forward? There is nothing wrong in reclaiming our heritage. At a personal level if I don't own up my past I cannot have a healthy self-esteem. Similarly as a nation, if we as Indians do not acknowledge and own up our history, our heritage we will not be proud of anything in India. This is just a glimpse of the rich discussion on allied topics in the panel discussion.

Takeaways of some participants attending the Vedic Wisdom Festival.

*This year my biggest takeaways were how we can bring more sattva in our lives by adopting an Ayurveda prescribed lifestyle. I also gained clarity on the framework of Dharma as means to individual and social happiness. - Naveen, Pune.*

*The panel discussion was very informative and put across by Swami Brahmanidanandaji very clearly and assertively. These discussions are very necessary to awaken the Dharmic Kshatriya in each one of us.*  
- Kamini Asrani, Mumbai.

*I gained great insights into how the knowledge contained in the Vedas of the limitless non-dual reality stands as the basis of the Hindu culture. I learned how this wisdom manifests in and through people's lives, branches of studies, the infrastructure, governance model and all other areas of the individual, family, society and nation. The speakers from varied backgrounds and nationalities highlighted the universal and eternal relevance of the vedic wisdom. My heartfelt pranams to Swamiji, Swaminiji, all the Acharyas and scholars who spoke and to the organisers Sunitha and Suresh.*  
- Prashanth Mohan, Australia.

*There were blessed opportunities to reinforce my learnings on Dharma giving everlasting happiness, learn some nuances of Ayurveda upadesha that are best practices to lead a*

*healthy life and how it is linked to purusharthas, breaking unhealthy thought patterns and thinking clearly, how my nature is anandah and happiness happens, what is moksha, the beautiful elucidation of sadhana and devotion in an art form, beautiful insights on how spiritual mindset will give worldly happiness too and some thought provoking discussions on Hinduism. I'm truly a more enriched person as a result of this exposure*

*- Jaya Ramachandran, Bangalore.*

*The Vedic Festival not only opened the wisdom of the Vedas to us, it also covered a wide range of current issues that we often hear about. Apart from Swamiji and Swamiji's discourses which are like nectar to us, I was particularly happy to listen to Jonas Masseti from Brazil. How this knowledge has influenced masses across the world but we as a country are not able to accept this wisdom in a vast majority. The concluding panel discussion was very engaging and put forward to opposing viewpoints. Suresh was once again at his best in taking us all on this wonderful journey.*

*- Sraboni Chaudhuri, Mumbai.*

*I felt blessed to attend this festival live first time. Really keen for the Mumbai ashram to be set up so international students like myself can plan to attend short-term courses. Some of my key takeaways were*

*1) Swamiji said - "This festival is connected to you & what you want is universal for a human being. Limitation is not what I have but what I see that I am - that matters." 2) Ishwarya shared - "You train the body in order to forget the body." 3) Acharya Jonas shared - "Spiritual growth happens only with effort. Once you investigate what you want or why a person behaves in a certain manner or why I am not happy, growth happens". - Nirmala Iyer, London, UK.*

*Swami Brahmavidananda in the panel on Hinduism ji handled the viewpoint of the guest with so much tact, diplomacy and elan, countering each point with the appropriate facts, and firmness assertiveness, even when we were told that Hindus should learn to "move on", as if nothing had happened to them through countless invasions. To move on we needed at the very least an acknowledgment of the atrocities that were undeniably perpetrated. He emphasized that the Hindu community needed validation before we could move on. He stood up for our religion, our culture, our world view with the same amount of assertiveness that he had always taught us, his students. - Meena kripalani, Mumbai.*

*"Love resolves contentious division. But to discover love without conditions is beyond the reach of the average survivor-ego, in this highly competitive society. Without the experience of such love there is nothing worthwhile in life to accomplish.."*

*- Swami Dayananda Saraswati*

## 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 nofervor 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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Year End Retreat, AVG Saylorsburg, PA, USA



## Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti, Coimbatore

