



Arsha Vidya Newsletter

Rs. 15



Vol. 23

January 2022

Issue 1

New year (2022) at Anaikatti Ashram, Coimbatore



Upanishad camp at Anaikatti Ashram, Coimbatore

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Sādhana-pañcakam
Pujya Swamiji's transcribed talk

This is the eleventh part of the serial article, continuation from December 2021 newsletter.

THREE TYPES OF LAKṢAṆĀ

The question now is, what is the kind of *lakṣaṇā* in this case? There are three types. One is called *jahallakṣaṇā*. Another is called *ajahallakṣaṇā*. And the third is called *jahad-ajahad-lakṣaṇā*, also known as *bhāga-tyāga-lakṣaṇā*. *Jahallakṣaṇā* is a *lakṣaṇā* wherein the word goes away. Somebody asked where Swami Dayānanda is in Rishikesh? Someone replied, '*gaṅgāyām asti*', in the locative case which literally means the person is sitting in the Gaṅgā! So in *jahallakṣaṇā*, the word Gaṅgā goes away, and only the sense of the riverbank remains. So, 'He is on the Gaṅgā', means 'He is on the banks of the Gaṅgā river,' and not in the river itself. If you watch your sentences daily, you will find that you use these *lakṣaṇās*. They are not found just in the *sāstra*. So in this example, the word referring to the river itself goes away, yielding its place to another word that is relevant, namely the river-bank. This makes the sentence meaningful.

The second type of *lakṣaṇā* we have already seen, namely *śveto dhāvati*, white runs, or *kākebhyaḥ dadhi rakṣyatām*, 'protect the curd from crows.' There, the word *kāka* should be retained, and then the word *go*, cow, etc. should also be included. Similarly, *śveto dhāvati* means 'the white horse runs' or 'the white cat runs' or anything white. Here, the adjective 'white' is retained, and a substantive is brought in. So the white can refer to many things like, 'the white horse runs,' or 'the white cow runs,' or 'a white-clothed person runs.' Then you have a clean sentence. This is called *ajahallakṣaṇā*. The word used does not go away.

In the third type of *lakṣaṇā*, called *bhāga-tyāgalakṣaṇā*, one word goes away and the other word is retained. The sentence usually used as an example is *so'yaṁ devadat-taḥ*,⁶⁶ 'This is that Devadatta.' *Ayam*, this, means the one who obtains at this time and in this place. You can only use *ayam* when Devadatta is right in front of you.

Saḥ, he, means the one who is at another time or place. So '*saḥ ayam devadattaḥ*', means we have two Devadattas. One of them is here and the other one is somewhere else or in some other time. But there are not two Devadattas.

To explain this example, there is a story: There were three friends living together in Chennai while they were going to college. On graduation, one of them got a job in Chennai and another in Coimbatore. The third guy, Devadatta, disappeared. Nobody knew where he was. Ten years went by. Then one day, the first two friends planned to meet each other in Coimbatore. When the first friend arrived at the spot, he saw the second friend talking to someone, a person with long hair and a beard. So he waited for introduction. Then the second friend said to him, 'Hey, do you recognize this person?' The first friend replied, 'No, I don't know him. Who is he?' And the second friend said, '*So'yam devadattaḥ*, this is that Devadatta.' *Saḥ* refers to Devadatta. So with the word *saḥ*, the second friend retained the meaning of Devadatta, while negating that other time, which was ten years ago, and that other place, which was Chennai. That time and place cannot be the same as now, so they are dropped. But the Devadatta in both of them is retained.

There is only one Devadatta, who is retained. The *viruddha-amśa*, contradictory aspect, of the sentence is given up, however, and therefore it is called *bhāgatyāga-lakṣaṇa*. *Bhāga* means a part, *tyāga* means giving up. One part is given up and one part is retained. If you say *ātmā* is *nitya*, eternal, then it is *bhāgatyāga-lakṣaṇa*. We understand *nitya* in a certain way, and therefore the word meaning of *nitya* is retained, but our concept of time-bound *nitya* is removed. We do the same thing with *satyam*.

Therefore we have this *bhāga-tyāga-lakṣaṇa*, also called *jahad-ajahad-lakṣaṇa*, wherein the contradictory aspect of the sentence is given up, and only the non-contradictory part is retained and immediately understood. In this way, the meaning of the sentence becomes very clear to you. In the sentence *tat tvam asi, tat re*

⁶⁶ सोऽयं देवदत्तः ऽ सः अयं देवदत्तः

fers to *jagatkāraṇam* Īśvara and *tvam* refers to *jīva*. Both of them are nothing but *sac-cidānanda ātmā* which is Brahman, one without a second. Brahman with the individual *upādhi*⁶⁷ is called *jīva*, and Brahman with the total *upādhi* is called Īśvara. You give up both the *upādhis* and will find there is identity. This is what is called *vākyārtha*, recognition of identity. Like the sentence *so'yam devadattaḥ*, the *māhāvākya* of *tat tvam asi* has this *bhāga-tyāga-lakṣaṇa*. It is all a matter of *vicāra*. This is how one inquires into the meaning.

⁶⁷ *upādhi* = conditioning adjunct, something that brings about an appearance of change in another thing that is nearby । उप समीपे वर्तिनि वस्तुनि स्वधर्मान् आदधाति इति उपाधिः

To be continued...

“Since the Lord is everything, He is all the names, all the forms and therefore we can invoke Him in any name, any form. This is the mature way of looking at the worship of God.”

- Swami Dayananda Saraswati

“Everyone is struggling to be free from being small, limited, bound, mortal and so on. The vision of our scriptures is that you are already free. If you think you are bound, that is purely a notion. That the self is free, is to be discovered. Freedom is your nature and you have to discover that freedom. You better know you are already free.”

- Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Kaivalyopaniṣad
Swami Vidadatmananda Saraswati's transcribed talk

This is the eighth part of the serial article, continuation from December 2021 newsletter.

In the statement of the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, quoted earlier,¹ in which the student approaches the revered teacher and asks, “What is it knowing which everything is as well known,” the student seems to want to know everything. When a person says he wants to know everything, it means he wants to be clear about everything, comfortable with everything. One can be comfortable with something only when one recognizes its reality. In knowing *brahman*, one knows everything. This is the reason why *brahma-vidyā* is called the most exalted knowledge.

The knowledge of the self is ever a secret

Why is *brahma-vidyā nigūḍhā*, most secret?

Brahmavidyā is held to be the most secret knowledge because it is where nobody would suspect it to be. Whoever is pursuing any form of knowledge, whether scientist, poet or artist, is in search of something fundamental. There is an inherent desire in every human being to know the truth; the intellect is as though wedded to the truth and the search can truly come to fruition only when *brahman* is discovered. When you are investigating the nature of a cell, you want to know the secret of life. A physical scientist wants to know the secret of matter. Yet, whatever it is that one wants to know, ultimately, the secret of all the secrets is *brahman*. This can be approached in any way—through chemistry, through physics, or whatever—because *brahman* is the fundamental truth that is behind everything: *Brahman* alone becomes the molecule, it alone becomes the atom, and it alone becomes DNA. *Brahman* is the fundamental essence of everything. As Lord Kṛṣṇa says, one's desire for knowledge is satiated when one comes to know *Brahman* : “It is that, knowing which, nothing else remains to be known.”²

¹ Mu.Up. 1.1.3

² यज्ज्ञात्वा नेह भूयोऽन्यज्ज्ञातव्यमवशिष्यते ॥ *yajjñātvā neha bhūyo'nyajjñātavyamavaśiṣyate* (BG 7.2)

Human curiosity knows no bounds. The more one knows the more one still wants to know; he does not ever seem to find what has to be known. However, when it comes to gaining the knowledge of *brahman*, the very desire for knowledge gets satisfied, it reaches its fruition.

When it is said there that upon knowing *brahman* nothing remains to be known, it also means that nothing remains to be done. Usually after something is known, there is something to be done because the knowledge of a thing creates a desire to acquire or achieve. For instance, when I come to know about the Grand Canyon upon having read the description and seen the pictures, I want to go there. The knowledge of something desirable thus creates a desire to achieve it, to acquire and enjoy it. Knowledge creates desire, and desire creates action.

Knowledge is usually not an end, but a beginning. *Brahmavidyā* is a different kind of knowledge; it is both the beginning and the end. Knowing *brahman* as the self, there remains no need to achieve anything, because, as said before, what it involves is *prāptasya prāptiḥ*, the achievement of that which is already achieved.

Vedānta teaches that what one wants to achieve is the limitless, which is one's own nature. When *brahman* is known, it is known as the self; the truth is known correctly when it is known to be one's own self. In the Upadeśa Sāram³, Ramaṇa Maharṣi says, "He (alone) knows God properly who knows God as his self." The knowledge becomes complete when there is total satisfaction. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, *etadbuddhvā buddhimān syāt kṛtakṛtyaśca bhārata*⁴, knowing this, man becomes wise and gains fulfillment. We gain total fulfillment in life when we know that *brahman* or God is our own self. If we know God to be infinite but still continue to think of ourselves as limited beings, there can be no contentment in life.

³वेषहानतः स्वात्मदर्शनम् । ईशदर्शनं स्वात्मरूपतः ॥

veṣahānataḥ svātmadarśanam, īśadarśanam svātmārūpataḥ (Upadeśa Sāram 25)

⁴ BG 15.20

We take for granted that we are what we take ourselves to be, and that the truth is elsewhere and God is also elsewhere. Therefore, this knowledge remains ever a secret. As long as we look for it outside of ourselves, so long does it remain hidden from us. As long as the tenth boy keeps looking for the tenth boy, the tenth boy remains undiscovered. Therefore, the identity of the tenth boy is the most secret. Yet to whom does this remain a secret? It is a secret for the one searching for the tenth boy. Similarly, when the human being searches for happiness and freedom, which amounts to searching for *brahman*, its identity remains a secret because it is his very self.

Why does this continue to remain a secret? It is because he has already concluded that he is not *brahman*, already concluded that he is limited.

While its identity remains a secret, it is not as if the self can ever remain hidden. The nature of the self is consciousness and consciousness is ever manifest, ever evident, and ever experienced. Also, it is not that one never experiences the self, because the fact is that without the self no experience is possible. Therefore, the self is not 'hidden' in that sense; it is hidden only in the notion that one considers oneself to be a limited individual.

Vedānta presents the famous example of the rope and snake: What lies in front of us is a rope, but because of poor light or some other reason, we perceive it as a snake. The rope is thus 'hidden' from sight, but where is it hidden? It is merely hidden behind the notion of it being a snake. It is the notion of the presence of the snake that keeps the rope hidden from plain sight; the conclusion that it is a snake alone hides the rope. So also, that which keeps *brahman* hidden from us is our conclusion that we are *jīvas*, limited individual beings. That conclusion makes us look for *brahman* elsewhere and keeps us from looking for it where it is. It is in that sense that *brahmavidyā* is *nigūḍhā*, hidden.

Another reason that the knowledge of *brahman* remains a secret is because it can be appreciated only by those who are eligible and qualified. This might make someone think that if this is the ultimate secret, either no one knows it or it is un-

knowable, or perhaps only a few privileged ones can know it. But that is not so; *sadā sadbhiḥ sevya mānām*, it is constantly pursued and also known by the noble ones, by the learned, and by those who have gained purity of mind; by them is *brahman* always known. The knowers of *brahman* behold it in their hearts as their own selves. Clearly, therefore, it is not that *brahman* is not known or cannot be known. The wise do indeed abide in the knowledge of *brahman*. The point here is that this extraordinary achievement is not arbitrary or mysterious and if many have achieved it so can we.

When can one always abide in something? It is possible only when it is one's own self. Only when we know *brahman* as our own selves can we always abide in *brahman*. As long as God is known as someone different and apart from us, we cannot always abide in God. Again, as Pūjya Swamiji would say, God comes and goes but the seer ever remains, because God is thought to be different from ourselves. As long as the mind is focused on God, so long is God an object of experience; when the focus of the mind changes, God is no longer an object of experience. We must understand that the self is not an object of experience. It is one's own self, and, therefore, ever shining and ever oneself.

Oh revered sir, please impart that knowledge of *brahman*, which is of this nature.

To be continued...

“Memory is not meant for self-judgment but purely for practical things. Without it you will be asking your wife every morning who she is, or you will be eating four lunches a day. To judge yourself on the basis of memory is the silliest thing. Use your memory only as it is meant to be used.”

- Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa
As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

This is the seventh part of the serial article, continuation from December 2021 newsletter.

सर्वदाभिगतः सद्भिः समुद्र इव सिन्धुभिः । आर्यः सर्वसमश्चैव सदैव प्रियदर्शनः ॥ १-१-१६

स च सर्वगुणोपेतः कौसल्यानन्दवर्धनः । समुद्र इव गाम्भीर्ये धैर्येण हिमवानिव ॥ १-१-१७

विष्णुना सदृशो वीर्ये सोमवत्प्रियदर्शनः । कालाग्निसदृशः क्रोधे क्षमया पृथिवीसमः ॥ १-१-१८

धनदेन समस्त्यागे सत्ये धर्म इवापरः । तमेवंगुणसम्पन्नं रामं सत्यपराक्रमम् ॥ १-१-१९

sarvadābhigataḥ sadbhiḥ samudra iva sindhubhiḥ |

āryaḥ sarvasamaścaiva sadaiva priyadarśanaḥ || 1-1-16

sa ca sarvagunopetaḥ kausalyānandavardhanaḥ |

samudra iva gāmbhīrye dhairyaṇa himavāniva || 1-1-17

viṣṇunā sadṛśo vīrye somavatpriyadarśanaḥ |

kālāgnisadrśaḥ krodhe kṣamayā pṛthivīsamaḥ || 1-1-18

dhanadena samastyāge satye dharma ivāparaḥ |

tamevaṅguṇasampannaṁ rāmaṁ satyaparākramam || 1-1-19

Rama is loved by all. He is *sādhu*, saintly, a good person. *Sādhu*, the word, is sometimes used in a derogative sense. But a simple man is different from a simpleton. A *sādhu* is one who is not capable of doing any mischief. Rama is one who is aware of his strength. He accommodates the mischief of others; he is a good person. But he is aware of himself and his position - you cannot just hobnob with him. He is one who is capable and unerringly dependable. In the same way the ocean is always sought out by rivers, the way they all run to the ocean, naturally and without exception, all good people always seek out Rama.

Āryaḥ, pūjyaḥ: He is the most worshipful person. Even as you see him, you feel like offering your salutations. He commands respect. In dealing with all people, rich or poor, there is no question of partiality on Rama's part. He is a man of equal vision in dealing with people, *sarvasamaḥ*. He is always pleasing and

cheerful, *sadaiva priyadarśanaḥ*. He is endowed with all the good qualities, *sarvagunopetaḥ*. If you want to know what are those good qualities, just watch Rama's life. He brings joy, , to his mother, Kausalya. Whenever she thinks of him, she is in *samādhi*. Just his walk, and she is in ecstasy. The thought of him makes his mother's heart well with joy, *ānandavardhanaḥ*. She is proud that he is her son.

His magnitude and his magnanimity, *gāmbhīrya*, are like the ocean's. He is commodious like the ocean - any amount of water can join it. In his fullness and his accommodation he is oceanic. In his courage and bravery he is like the Himalayas. See the peak; it stands all weathers. Rama is like Mount Everest, towering, snow-mantled, above all the other peaks. Whatever the winds that blow, it keeps itself bright and straight. None can shake him. In his *vīrya*, his capacity, strength, power, he is like even Lord Vishnu. Such is his power to sustain and protect people. He is the equal to Lord Vishnu, the sustainer. In the trinity of the Lord, God is divided into three. Vishnu is the sustainer; another dissolves; another creates. Those are the three functions that constitute *īśvara*, Lord Ishvara. Like Vishnu, Rama's storehouse of resources is always full. He is resourceful in his power to sustain people. Like even the moon, *somavatpriyadarśanaḥ*, his being is very pleasing, bright. He is not like the sun, in whose presence you must close your eyes. You can see him, but he does not frighten you. You can gaze upon him like you do upon the cool moon.

When he is angry, angry because some wrong has been committed, it is an anger, *krodha*, which is under his control. It is an anger which shows he knows there is something to be done. The fire of destruction, *kālāgni* - which brings about the dissolution of the world when one cycle of creation is over - is his anger. His anger is compensated by compassion, forgiveness, *kṣama*. His patience is like the earth, *pṛthivī*; you cannot make him angry easily. How is the earth patient? The earth goes on bearing the weight of all the mistakes and misdeeds that are committed, and she still yields. She is patient; she keeps giving to you. She gives you all resources, no matter your habits and customs. She never stops thinking that one day you will realize. Goddess Prthivi, Mother Earth, is always considered to be the most patient woman. It is she who gives you all resources, She lets you walk on her; you need not kick her. But she never rejects you. She is the embodi-

ment of patience.

In giving, Rama is like Kubera, the god of money, *dhanadaḥ*. Rama is the treasury of all the riches. He has all wealth, and he never loses by giving. In speaking truth, *satya*, in doing exactly what is to be done, he is like a second god of *dharma* - even though there is only the one god of *dharma*.

“Rama is this person. He is there, my dear Valmiki. He is more than what you asked for,” says Narada.

“There is this man known as Rama, a king in the line of the Ikshvaku. O Valmiki, I hope you are satisfied with this man I have introduced to you. More than a man, Rama is endowed with all these virtues.” Having told this much, Narada tells the story of Rama, from the time Rama was a child. But first we need to describe the setting.

Rama is the son of Dasharatha. King Dasharatha had three wives. He ruled the kingdom of Ayodhya for a long time. Ayodhya means “that which cannot be won over.” In that family of the Solar dynasty, in the Ikshvaku line, every king was renowned. Dasharatha lived up to the status of his family. He proved himself to be a wise, great king. Yet, to his disappointment, for a long time he had no children, no sons. Therefore he propitiated the various *devatās*, the gods, and performed a Vedic ritual called *putrakāmeṣṭi*. It was said that the ṛṣi Rshyashrnga, a wise man living in the nearby forest, should be the one to conduct the ritual. He should be the officiating priest; it should be conducted in his presence. This was done, and Rshyashrnga took from the very ritual fire itself some of the *pāyasam*, the rice pudding. He gave that to Dasharatha, instructing him to give it to his wives. If they took this offering, they would be blessed with children.

Dasharatha gave the *pāyasam* to his wives, to Kausalya, to Kaikeyi, and to Sumitra. Kausalya was the first queen. Dasharatha gave half to Kausalya. Of the other half he gave one third to Kaikeyi. The other two thirds he gave to Sumitra. Each one of them, in time, brought forth children. To Kausalya was born Rama. To Kaikeyi was born Bharata. Sumitra was blessed with two children, Lakshmana and Shatrughna. These were the four sons of Dasharatha, and he was pleased.

To be continued...

The Wholeness of You by Swamini Saralananda

This is the eighth part of the serial article, continuation from December 2021 newsletter.

‘Happiness Because’

This applies to anything that we enjoy as a “happiness-because”, whether it be an ice cream cone or a new relationship. For no other reason but that it is dependent on external things which guarantee no certainty. How many people have said: “Till death do us part.” This is not a happy piece of logic to accept because who wants to be dependent on anything or anybody to be happy. Any form of dependency is not comfortable. If we count on happiness from relationships, there is always going to be the tension and disappointment when significant others don’t meet our expectations. And counting on happiness that depends on people, situations and things, like suppose when you know you deserve a promotion, it can always come up against blocks. And any obstructions that prevents you from getting what you want usually make you angry or depressed or both.

So then suppose you wanted the promotion so much, then you get it. Before long you find out that you didn't bargain for the huge increase in the amount of stress and time. The family is unhappy that they see less of you and express it in ways you never expected. People in the company who were your friends become distant because of jealousy amongst other things. You were looking forward to the extra clout and prestige you thought you had earned in that company, but all in all it turns out that the loss is greater than the gain. How they say, “Be careful what you pray for, you might get it.”

And how many of us ladies have bought some very beautiful expensive shoes but they never lend themselves to get broken in and after enough blisters, off they went to the Goodwill. This all happens more than we like to admit. Whether it's a pair of shoes or a promotion, it's anybody's' guess how happy anything will make me and for how long. Happiness that depends on people, things and situations makes us no promises and “I'm forever blowing bubbles...” For the most part our life is nothing but doing and getting, busy trying to fulfill our desires, trying to get as much happiness as I can. Our desires keep us running and they direct the very course of our life. In spite of all our best efforts, the success in this grabber game

of life never feels like enough. Most of us have heard this one; “The one who wins in the rat race is the biggest rat.” The fact remains, happiness is more like an occasional guest coming to spend some time with me and always leaves in its own time.

Happiness Free From Relativity

Now here a shift in the line of logic. The purpose is to arrive at a way of understanding ‘happiness’ free from all relativity: We all fight off unhappiness as though it is a foreign invader, like a virus in our bloodstream. It is a disease. In our Western culture especially, you can see the flagrant national obsession with avoiding pain at all cost. In fact, take it one step further we can say that there is a societal addiction to instant gratification. We want what we want when we want it, as though it’s our right. After all the American constitution says so by that “pursuit of happiness” clause. I have the right to be happy therefore this also means that I always do whatever I can to keep unhappiness away. This is a natural way of life for the majority of us. Our whole biological system is geared for avoiding pain and drawn towards gaining happiness. Is there meaningful logic behind this?

The answer to this is crucial here. Could it be that our true nature is always innately struggling, profoundly longing, to just be itself? If it makes any sense at all then it is something that I need to see clearly. And I should know it well enough that there are no doubts, that my natural state of being is happiness itself. Suppose on the other hand that my natural state/self is a mixture of both joy and sorrow by nature, that is its reality. Then both of them would feel natural to me and I could slip in and out of them both as something normal since they are natural. We are always most comfortable with what is natural. While of course any joy is comfortable, I feel at home in it, it is the opposite with suffering. Just as when we pick up a virus, the body temperature rises as a fighting response; our immune system kicks into emergency action by increasing our white blood cells and they go on attack moving around in our blood stream to destroy the invaders. It’s just natural for this to happen because the body is programmed such that its normal state is to be healthy. Our body mind complex instinctually ‘seeks’ to maintain wellbeing as its natural state.

To be continued...

Happy new year to all of you.

We are beginning this new year like previous year with the covid spread all around us and therefore there is an environment of uncertainty, anxiety, fear which is spread among many people. Since we are not familiar with this virus, we do not know how it is going to act out. So lot of uncertainty and anxiety is there in our mind which is understandable. The immediate means available is of course, prayer.

भयेभ्यस्त्राहि नो देवि दुर्गे देवि नमोऽस्तुते

bhayebhyastrhi no devi durge devi namo'stute.

O Durge Devi, O mother goddess Durga! please protect us from this fear. So if we have this type of concern and fear in our mind, which is quite likely, then prayer is the means available to us. At same time it is possible to see also or recognise a ray of hope of something positive in this life, which is there and it is Ishwara and Ishwara's grace. Although looking at what is happening to human beings on this earth, it is hard to see the grace and benevolence of Ishwara. But if we leave aside the human society and look at the rest of the creation, look at the rest of the nature, then we will find that Ishwara's grace is very evident, as to how he is benevolent and how he cares every creature that is created, how the natural instincts of *āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunam*, how there is provision for fulfilling all these needs but we find that the nature also seems to be antagonistic to us. We know that is also due to the abuse of human free will. So what I wish to point out is, the pain and suffering in our life is also built into the nature.

Of course, *jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyuah*. Death is certain for the one who is born. *Janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhī* – birth, death, old age, diseases all these are part of the creation and that is unavoidable. So this pain is also unavoidable. Perhaps lot of pain is also created by the abuse of free will on the part of human being, like global warming exc. and its consequences in terms of the floods and famine and many other natural calamities. Unfortunately, human being does have a contribution to the suffering of the human beings and as a consequence, other living beings are also going through that suffering. If we see the fact that Ishwara's benevolence still exists even when these viruses come, there is still some solution there, either in terms of technology or in terms of the virus also in course of time lying down on its own. While we are anxious, fearful and there may be a set of mind in which we are disappointed, we have resentment and anger towards what is happening to us and may be some disillusion with Ishwara. I would like to point out that in spite of all of these, Ishwara is benevolent. Ishwara is of the nature of grace and therefore grace is always prevalent everywhere including our own life. Let us also take that into consideration.

As our Pujya Swamiji used to point out, 'our breathing is grace, we wake up in the morning after going to sleep that is grace and then if you perhaps investigate what all we are eating we will be surprised that in spite of eating all types of stuff we are still alive and moving about'. In the midst of this environment which causes uncertainty and anxiety, there is also a scope for recognising and thinking about the grace that we are enjoying from Ishwara and from nature. Let that give us a hope and enthusiasm and a positive, proper and right thinking. 'I am enjoying grace even though I may also be in one of those who have had to suffer and who is suffering from the consequences of this virus or its derivatives. Despite that we still have grace in our lives, in every life which is alive and breathing.'

Therefore, let me recognise that, while determining about my life, what reactions and state of my mind I have, let me have hope and be grateful to Ishwara. Let there be a sense of gratitude in me, regardless of what the situation is and that gratitude enables me to faithfully and positively continue with hope for the future, with also motivation to do what is required in order to make this life better. So that I become a contributor to the improvement to the life of others. There is always scope for this type of right, positive thinking, which is the source of happiness. In my own small way, I can remain a contributor with the spirit of being able to do something for others. That is the harmony or the law that is existing in this universe, that every element contributes to the universe.

Human being of course has to use the freewill in order to adopt that spirit of contribution, that I am being helped all the time. So to help is also my duty and my pleasure. As a human being I am given this freewill and also many other abilities. It is my privilege and pleasure to contribute not only for myself but also for others, up to extent I can. That is the true source of happiness. In any circumstances it is always possible that we can have the right attitude, arising from the right understanding. We have the right kind of act or behaviour, which is conducive to and contributes to the happiness in our mind. I wish you and pray to Ishwara that may all of us get this ability and tranquillity in our minds, that composure of the mind, because of which we can see the positive that is existing, the grace that is existing, the benevolence that is existing in our lives, despite this evident suffering. We may make a note of that and we may have that spirit of gratitude, prayer and the contribution up to the extent we can. In that way we derive happiness for our lives and contribute to the happiness of others.

May Ishwara give us the composure, understanding, insight, inspiration and action through which we can still maintain composure of our minds and derive peace tranquillity in our lives in the coming year, despite whatever happens and may happen. *Om Tat Sat.*

Om Nama shivaya nama om.....

First of all I wish you all a very happy new year! We have so many festivals like ugadi, Tamil new year, day after deepavali, etc. and quite prevalent is the English New Year day we are celebrating today.

Some of you may not know what is the *tithi* today, but you know what is the date today. What is the month according to Indian calendar you may not know but you will know the English month. That is why somebody nicely said,

न भारतीय नववत्सरोयं तथापि सर्वस्य शिवप्रदः स्यात् ।

यतः धरित्री निखिलैव जनेता ततः कुटुम्बायितं विश्वमेव ॥

Even though it is not the New Year as per Indian calendar but let it also be a source of "*Shivaprada*:" auspiciousness for everybody. In our culture everything we connect with prayer. So we have one more occasion to pray. In Western culture they celebrate with party. We celebrate with prayers.

Pujya Swamiji says that we require such day, such event, which we call a beginning. Because something may not be going okay or even if something is going okay, we want to take it to the next level, then we are waiting for some occasion to reboot our system and start afresh in our life.

Similarly, we are waiting for an occasion to reboot our system. Like with our computer somehow it is not working we reboot the system. Similarly in life also we require rebooting or refreshing.

So as a first day of the year we take this opportunity for offering prayer. Because human beings live upon hope. Hope alone keeps us going. When the person loses all his hopes he lands in difficulty to survive. So hope is important. And that hope is expressed very well on days like this New Year day. We have desire to grow. Our desire manifests in the form of our New Year day resolution.

In fact New Year day resolution itself has become a joke, because many of us cannot fulfill the same. But I am sure that some of you must be making some New Year resolution.

One or two points regarding New Year day resolution is that you should keep them minimum. Do not make a big list of resolutions but keep one or two of them.

Be sure how you are going to implement it. Better to put it in the language of prayer, “ Oh! Lord, I pray to give me the ability of fulfilling my resolution.” So that you may not have guilt in case you could not follow them. Convert the resolution into prayer. Let our every activity be prayer. Pujya Swamiji nicely says that prayer is an action; prayerfulness is an attitude, where our free will is fully expressed. Prayerfulness is awareness that everything is given and the given is non - separate from the giver, the Lord. It is an attitude of remaining connected to the Lord . In fact that is also called devotion. Devotion is my being aware of my connection with the lord.

Prayerfulness is I remain aware of the connection in whatever I am doing. Whatever I have as response to the world physical, oral and mental all are pervaded by my prayerfulness, where I am appreciating the presence of *Ishwara*. Prayer is sending a whatsapp message or making a call.

What is prayerfulness? Remaining online with Bhagawan ! Prayer fullness will bring objectivity to our life. It will bring pragmatism.

What is pragmatism? It is considering all the factors involved in our action to accomplish our wish. There are some hidden variables and they will be taken care by prayer. This is religious pragmatism. New Year prayer is nothing but religious pragmatism. Generally people think that asking for some benefits. That is not prayer. Truly speaking *puja, japa, parayana and upasana* are prayers. It is like booking your ticket and paying through your debit or credit card. Then only the ticket will be confirmed. Similarly along with your requests to Bhagawan you should do some *japa* or *parayanam*. That alone is considered as a full-fledged prayer in Vedic culture. That is what we are doing today. So we have got prayers in our life, we have got prayerfulness. At the same time this prayerfulness will help you to be objective and to be clear about our action. Prayer is not the substitute for action. The right approach is making efforts prayerfully. That is called a life of a karma yogi, the life of a devotee. When we lead such a life we will have a Happy New Year. As Pujya Swamiji said every day will be a new day, every day will be a celebration. We pray to Bhagawan that may we have these prayers in our life, prayerfulness resulting in objectivity, clarity and sufficient efforts. I wish you a very happy New Year 2022 !

- Report by Swami Jagadatmanandaji.

Sanctuary and Learning space

The Arsha Vidya Sampradaya coordinated and organised a meeting on "Projects on Dharma by the Arsha Vidya Teachers" on 7th January 2022. One of the projects shared was the Sanctuary and learning space at Har Mandir, in Madikeri, Coorg, Karnataka. The gist of the sharing is as follows.

The word *dharma*, as in many words in Samskrutam, can have varied meanings. Pujya Swamiji Dayananda Saraswati has talked immensely and explicitly about *dharma* as that which holds, *dharma* as duty and what needs to be done, *dharma* as values, *dharma*'s inherent quality/characteristics, and *dharma* as religion. The clarity Pujya Swamiji brought made us, the pan-Indian makers of the learning space in Coorg, Karnataka, focus on a *dhārmik* space.

With this inspiration, Har Mandir, the Sanctuary and Learning Space emerged in 2019, under the auspices of Swamini Swatmabodhanandaji, with 22 children, as a free-residential school, strongly grounded on the principles of Vegetarianism and pedagogy.

Har Mandir is a registered primary school, to be affiliated to CBSE, with 75 children today, - about 40 children staying in the school vatika and 30 as day scholars. The children are mostly 1st generation learners, migrant laborers' children, children whose parents have not completed schooling/higher education, very poor farmers children, or children of single parents. But these children cannot access private school education. Government schools are an option for them, yet the aspiration of parents to get a private school, English medium school, and affordable school gets taken care of with Har Mandir for them.

The children are taken care of by 2 Mothers, 7 Educators and 4 Helpers. The Mother's are trained nurses and are getting trained on khadi, yoga and knitting to take over as core educators for children above 9 years. The educators are local, primarily trained holistically by the Swami Vivekananda Training Institute, Mysuru, giving a good basic grounding, from where we (re)educate them with exposures to tailor made topics like circle time, thematic planning, karadi path, etc.

The early years Stage, called *prārambha*, takes care of children from 4 years to 9 years. Kannada is the medium of instruction (in the early years) and English is sprinkled generously in the environment along with abundant interaction with

nature in its pristine form, farming, cow rearing and milking, abundant movement and hand work and traditional/local music and dance. Pedagogy is driven by art, craft, concrete, 1st hand sensorial experiences, stories, yoga, to cover the learning outcomes, needed for the domains - physical, emotional, social, personal, language and Cognitive.

"Food on the planet is vegetarian" is the slogan that drives nutrition and food in Har Mandir.

Prayer fuels the dawn, the day, the dusk and the dark. For sustaining what the children are exposed to, technology is used extensively for photo documentation, for making short and crisp community videos exposing them to not only the activities in the school, but also educative videos on how to stay calm during pandemics, pranayama, prayer, etc., are posted frequently.

Learning partners who have supported us unconditionally so far are -

- Arsha Vidya Gurukulam,
- Dr Dennis - Social worker in SVYM,
- Ms Hema Shankar - the Yoga Educator,
- Dr Balasubramaniam Chief of SVYM and his dynamic team,
- Ms Maria Nachiappan - the reptile specialist,
- Ms Bharati Mohan, the puppet trainer,
- Ms Saleela Patkar - the social worker,
- Dr Ram Kumar, Agastya Foundation,
- Ms Rani Appiah - the 1st Principal
- Nithya Shanti - the young and dynamic spiritual Guru,
- Ms Preethi Balan - the Mindfulness coach, Ms Avni Varia - the khadi trainer,
- Mr Sandeep

and the generous donors in Smt and Shri Sarasa Iyer, Smt Dhanalakshmi Nair, Mr Dominic Bascarino, Ms Deepa, Ms Sujata, Mr Gurmat Maneet Singh, Mr Uvais.

- Report by Radhika Srinivas

RETREAT 1

Three day Shibir by Acarya Lavanya Ramgopal on Sri Dakshinamurthy Stotram, Aug 13-15, 2021

Arshabodhini Group from Chennai whose acaryas are disciples of Swami Brahmayogananda and Swami Paramarthananda was welcomed eagerly by the facility group. We had a retreat after a long gap of one and half years due to Covid-19 Pandemic.

The participants, being their first visit to Pujya Swamiji's birthplace felt blessed and enjoyed every moment of their stay and were taught Adi Shankara's text on Sri. Dakshinamurthy. It was an auspicious prayerful beginning for the retreats, especially coinciding with I-Day celebrations.



RETREAT 2

Three day Shibir with Acarya Ranganji and Smt.Suryapriya of Arsha Bodhini Trust- Vedanta retreat in Manjakkudi, Oct 1-3, 2021

A group of 40 students from Chennai Arsha Bodhini Trust attended a Vedanta program at the *Jnana Pravaha* in Pujya Swamiji's *Jan-mabhoomi*--Manjakkudi.

The topic was Manisha Pancakam by Acarya Ranganji and "Ishvara, Guru and Sastra" was addressed by Smt. Suryapriya. The participants were focused in getting meaningful insights during the retreat and expressed their appreciation of the facilities and ambience provided for Vedantastudy. Some of them made use of access to digital archives and the reading room facilities. The Group chanted Bhagavad Gita and took Bhagavan Krishna around the Perumal temple as a culmination of the retreat.



RETREAT 3

Swamini Vidyananda of Arsha Gurukulam, Chennai conducted a Vedanta retreat for her students from Oct 18-23, 2021.

The topic was Vedanta from Upanishads – 10 verses

The students were grateful to their teacher to have been able to conduct a live retreat after a long gap and made full use of their time with teacher. They also enjoyed the ambience the facility provided.



RETREAT 4

Mrs Neema & Surya, Acarya, Mumbai conducted a Vedanta retreat for her students from Dec 01 -10, 2021.

The topic was Maitreyi Brahmanam and Bhagavad Gita – Third Chapter. The participants were mainly from Mumbai and a cosmopolitan group. They enjoyed the uniqueness of the village, the birth place of their acaryas' guru and were able to listen to the acarya in an undistracted manner away from the buzz of their city. They profusely thanked the staff for their hospitality and promised to come again.



RETREAT 5

Swamini Sumatmananda conducted a Vedanta retreat, topic – Jiva Yatra – Dec 20-25, 2021.

They were a small group of 17 students who have been long studying with Swamini, some of them on-line. It should be mentioned that this was the only group which completely participated at the puja at Pujya Swamiji's shrine on all days. We thank Swamini for the same. The group members who are long time donors of AIM for Seva could see first-hand and feel doubly happy how the chatralayas are run and how the children are happy to be here.



RETREAT 6

The year ended like even the retreats began in August by the same Acarya, Mrs. Lavanya Ramgopal, Dec 29 2021 - Jan 02, 2022

As they were familiar with the place they had even more a productive session on Vakya vritti, Adi Sankara's updesha text. The students and even people who listen to the acarya online are amazed at the excellent teaching in Tamil on such a profound text. Arshabodhini group participants are blessed to have such acaryas in their midst. We were also blessed to have Swami Brahmayogananda, the acaryas' guru present during this retreat.



At the end of each retreat, the senior most person around, Sri. M.G. Srinivasan, Correspondent, SDET facilitated the *acaryas* and shared his perspective about the village and how it grew over the years and welcomed all retreaters to keep coming back to Pujya Swamiji's Janmabhumi.

The retreat members and *acaryas* were also briefed about the structure of *Jnana Pravaha*, the availability of a reading room facility where AVR & PT (Arsha Vidya Research & Publication Trust) books are made available for study anytime of the day and access to Pujya Swamiji's talks on Vedanta texts spread over six 3-year courses at Gurukulams and also public talks and *satsangs* - over 7000 hours of talks are available for repeated *shravanam* and *mananam*. Some of the members made use of the facilities.

Satsangs and temple tours

At the end of the retreat, the groups embarked on temple tours. The participants were amazed to see how life revolved around temples and how our tradition continues to be maintained and followed in these religious structures and the local populace has their day-to-day life revolve around temple routines. *Satsangs* were conducted after dinner.

Manjakkudi tour

The participants witnessed first-hand how a tiny hamlet in the Kaveri delta transformed into a model village in the last decade and half. They took a tour of our *Gaushala* and organic rice fields and spent time with our Chatralayam students and came to know their dreams and aspirations.

Address by the Chairperson and Managing Trustee

In her heartfelt address (10th December 2021) to the *acaryas* and other members assembled at the *Jnana Pravaha*, Smt. Sheela Balaji, Chairperson and Managing Trustee of the Swami Dayananda Educational Trust (SDET) said she was inspired by Swamiji's vision and joined his movement of Seva. The result was transformative—both at a personal level as well as from the community standpoint—the way Manjakkudi evolved itself from a sleepy hamlet to a knowledge hub in the last 15 years. She also elaborated on how

Jnana Pravaha has evolved as a tribute to Pujya Swamiji's teachings

Concluding note

At the end of the retreats, the *acaryas* and some of the retreat members shared their experiences and had a word of appreciation for the excellent facilities provided in terms of accommodation, food and other arrangements. The *acaryas* also Visited SDET school, College and interacted with them and got to know the challenges teachers face in a village situation and offered whatever help they can to make the institutions grow and students get enough opportunities in their field of study.

On their part, representatives from the Swami Dayananda Educational Trust (SDET) welcomed the participants and *acaryas* to visit the village again to keep the tradition of teaching and Seva flourish at Pujya Swamiji's birth place. Swami Ramesvarananda welcomes all retreat participants to come again and make use of the Jnana Pravaha facilities, especially the Digital Archives and Pujya Swamiji authored books, and benefit from the retreats to have a wholesome and self-fulfilling life which Vedanta understanding can offer and lead to claiming the self to be one with Ishvara. **All that is here is Ishvara.**

- Report by Swami Ramesvarananda

"The ways of the mind are simple as long as you don't complicate them. And you complicate them only when you are confused, taking thought as "I" and "I" as thought. If you have that confusion, you will put yourself on all kinds of trips – sensuous trips, psychological trips, even spiritual trips. All of them will prove to be trips requiring further trips, until you trip into the grave. You must know that you are already full. As you are, you are limitless, free from sadness and sorrow."

- Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Upanishad camp at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti, Coimbatore

From Dec 26, 2021 to Jan 1, 2022 a spiritual camp was conducted at AVG, Anaikatti, Coimbatore, India.

Around 100 students participated. Swami Sadatmananda taught Chandogya Upanishad. Swami Sakshatkrutananda taught Brahadaranyaka Upanishad. Summary of the Upanishad classes will be separately presented.

The campers also took part in the New Year Puja at Sri Dakshinamurthy temple and puja for Pujya Swamiji's murti at the lecture hall on Jan 1, 2022.

The campers enjoyed the puja at the temples, meditation sessions, satsang sessions and the main Upanishad classes.

After March 2020 due to pandemic, physical camps were not held at AVG, Anaikatti. But online camps were conducted. This was the physical camp conducted after a long gap at AVG, Anaikatti, Coimbatore. There was very good response from the students for the camp. The students look forward for more physical camps in future.

- Report by N. Avinashilingam

Arsha Vidya Newsletter

Annual Subscription: Rs. 180 /-

Published by: V. Sivaprasad

Trustee, Sruti Seva Trust, Anaikatti, Coimbatore 641 108

Edited by:

Ramachandran S.N (+91 94879 11949)

Printed by: B. Rajkumar



Upanishad camp at Anaikatti Ashram, Coimbatore

