

Year End Retreat at AVG, Saylorsburg, PA, USA

The 2023 Year End Retreat at Ārṣa Vidyā Gurukulam in Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania, was a profound adhyātmika journey. The serene ambiance of the Gurukulam, set against the Pocono Mountains and equipped with numerous facilities, provided an ideal environment for deep spiritual engagement. The highlight of the camp were teachings by Swāmīni Svātmāvidyānanda jī and Swami Mukṭātmānanda jī on the Chhāṇḍogya Upaniṣad and Muṇḍakopaniṣad, which were not only enlightening but also immersive.

Attendees participated in a structured daily routine that included Abhiṣekam, Guided Meditation, insightful Discourses on the Upaniṣads, Yoga, and Chanting classes. The evenings were reserved for interactive Satsangas, allowing for deeper exploration and understanding of the teachings. Cultural performances by children enhanced the retreat's ambiance, adding a dimension of joy and celebration.

The retreat concluded on a high note, with special ceremonies to welcome the New Year, including the Dakṣiṇāmūrti Mūla Mantra Japa and midnight Bhajans. This gathering was not just an end-of-year event but a profound experience that left attendees uplifted and enriched.

Another delightful feature of such retreats that often gets overlooked is the long-lasting friendships formed between fellow satsangis, bonding over a common love for the teachings and Guru bhakti. We often sat late into the night reminiscing over our many experiences with our present Gurus, and with Pūjya Swāmijī, whose comforting presence continues to be felt in every inch of the Gurukulam, especially in the Dayālayam, where a life-like Mūrti is erected in his likeness. Indeed, Pūjya Swāmijī's parting sankalpa "I will always be with you" during his final visit to the Gurukulam continues to hold true, and will always remain a source of blessing to all those who dedicate themselves to the teachings.

Om Śrī Dayānanda Sadgurubhyo Namaḥ .

- Report by Prashant Parikh